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# PROVERBS AND COMMON SAYINGS

From the Chinese, 諸言  
TOGETHER WITH 諸言

MUCH RELATED AND UNRELATED MATTER

Interspersed with Observations on

Chinese Things-in-General.

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*New and Revised Edition.*

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## PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION.

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WITH the exception of the last fifty pages, this volume consists of material published in the *Chinese Recorder*, from 1882 to 1885. About 1,900 Phrases, Proverbs, Couplets, Odes, etc., are explained, but few of which, so far as the writer is aware, have been previously published. The hundred pages devoted to "Puns and other Linguistic Diversions," embracing more than 300 examples, open into an expansive territory, hitherto singularly neglected.

Those who have not examined the proverbial sayings of the Chinese are surprised at the richness of the language in this respect. The inquiry has been often made where so many proverbs are to be found, and the suggestion occasionally hazarded that the author "made them up out of his own head." Those most acquainted with the resources of the colloquial will best understand how unnecessary is such a theory.

Only a small part of the ample materials available has been here presented. In several instances unauthorized characters, or authorized characters in unauthorized senses, have been allowed to stand, since there seemed to be no better way to express the colloquial idea.

To the articles as originally published there was for a great length of time appended an invitation to any reader who observed in them errors of fact, or mistranslations, to communicate them to the author, who promised to be duly grateful. To this suggestion no attention was ever paid by any human being. This might be accounted for either on the supposition that there were no readers, that there were no mistakes, or that such readers as there were preferred to attend to their own terrestrial concerns, and, as the Chinese adage runs, allow the sick man to furnish his own perspiration.

In so wide a field as is covered by this volume, it is indeed certain that there must be many errors, due, as Dr. Johnson said of one of his false definitions, to "pure ignorance." The method of publication has greatly facilitated the multiplication of mistakes.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

---

Preface to the Original Edition ... ..	i
Preface to the Revision ... ..	iii

### Chapter I.—INTRODUCTORY.

Chinese Proverbs and their Classification ... ..	1
The Number and Currency of Chinese Proverbs ... ..	6
The Value of Chinese Proverbs ... ..	10
The Comprehension and Translation of Chinese Proverbs ... ..	11
Variations in Chinese Proverbs ... ..	28
The Collection and the Study of Chinese Proverbs ... ..	32

### Chapter II.

Quotations or Adaptations of Quotations from the Classics and other Standard Books ... ..	39
Proverbs from the Trimetrical Classic ... ..	40
"    "    "    Millenary Classic ... ..	40
"    "    "    Confucian Analects ... ..	41
"    "    "    Great Learning ... ..	41
Proverbial Phrases from the Doctrine of the Mean ... ..	41
"    Sayings from Mencius... ..	42
"    "    "    the Book of Changes ... ..	43
"    Phrases, etc., from the Book of Odes... ..	44
"    Quotations    "    "    "    "    Rites... ..	45
"    "    "    "    "    Shu Ching, or Book of History ... ..	46

### Chapter III.

Antithetical Couplets ... ..	48
------------------------------	----

### Chapter IV.

Poetical Quotations ... ..	63
----------------------------	----

### Chapter V.

Proverbs containing Allusions to Historical, Semi-historical, Legendary, or Mythical Persons or Events ... ..	85
--	----

Sayings relating to the time of the Contending Kingdoms	...	94
"      "      "      Han Dynasty and the time of the Three Kingdoms	... ..	100
"      "      "      T'ang Dynasty	... ..	106
"      "      "      Sung Dynasty	... ..	112
"      "      "      Ming Dynasty	... ..	116
"      "      "      Ch'ing Dynasty	... ..	121
"      with General Reference to Historic or Semi-historic Characters	... ..	122

### Chapter VI.

Proverbs relating to Specific Places or Districts, or to Persons or Events of merely Local Importance	... ..	128
--	--------	-----

### Chapter VII.

Puns and other Linguistic Diversions	... ..	149
Picture Puns...	... ..	149
Conversational Puns	... ..	157
Chinese Riddles, etc.	... ..	165
"      Character Puzzles and Cryptograms	... ..	171
"      Parodies	... ..	178
The Dissection of Chinese Characters	... ..	193
Chinese Puns—Two Senses of the same Character	... ..	195
Puns in which one word is used to suggest another word of the same sound	... ..	216
Double Puns	... ..	236
The Suppression of Final Characters	... ..	246

### Chapter VIII.

Miscellaneous Proverbs	... ..	254
Figurative Use of Birds, Animals, Vegetables, etc.	... ..	254
Proverbs relating to Physical Defects	... ..	256
"      "      "      Parts of the Body	... ..	258
"      from the Sects, Virtue-books, etc.	... ..	259
"      relating to the Seasons	... ..	261
"      "      "      Weather	... ..	264
"      containing Medical Advice, etc...	... ..	267
"      relating to a Typical Character	... ..	...
"      "      "      the Old Villager	... ..	272
"      "      "      Travels to the West, etc	... ..	275



Proverbs suggested by Chinese Fables	...	...	...	...	283
„ Illustrating Human Nature	...	...	...	...	288
„ „ Abusive Language	...	...	...	...	294
„ relating to Parents and Children	...	...	...	...	299
„ reflecting Chinese Superstitions	...	...	...	...	306
Chinese Prophecies	...	...	...	...	325

### Chapter IX.—CONCLUSION.

Additional Illustrations of the Origin, Growth, and Difficulties of Chinese Proverbs	...	...	...	...	340
Phrases and Proverbs relating to the Eye	...	..	...	...	340
Ambiguous and Allusive Proverbs	...	...	...	...	344
Proverbs relating to Theatrical Plays, etc.	...	...	...	...	363
„ „ „ Gambling, etc.	...	...	...	...	366
„ employing Numerals, etc.	...	...	...	...	369
Unexplained Proverbs	...	...	...	...	373





CHAPTER I.  
*INTRODUCTORY.*

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*Chinese Proverbs and Their Classification.*

IT is to be supposed that every one who makes any pretensions to a knowledge of the Chinese language will gain some kind of acquaintance with its classical writings. It is not thought necessary to commit them to memory, or to be examined upon their contents, but we should at least know what they are, and what they are about. We cannot expect to make much headway with the Chinese, or with any other people, if we ignore what they regard as splendid masterpieces of literature.

The Proverbs and Common Sayings of the Chinese are regarded by many students of the language with a species of good-natured contempt. They would no more waste their time in the investigation of such objects than they would devote a summer to catching a hogshead of angle-worms, or to baking a winter's supply of mud-pies. This view may be due in part to an inaccurate idea of what is connoted in the words "Chinese Proverbs and Common Sayings," and in part to the absence of any idea whatever on the subject. The Chinese language is a wide field—far too wide for any one man—and there is much of which any one person must be forever ignorant. The same considerations, however, which lead to the study of the Classics, with a view to a comprehension of their effect on the Chinese mind, must inevitably conduct us by a similar process to an examination of the Chinese proverbial philosophy. Not more sure is it that a certain aspect of the Chinese mind is represented in the Classical writings than that other and polyhedral aspects of the same mind are represented in their popular proverbs.

Of no people, perhaps, is this more emphatically true than of the Chinese. To the strong bias toward proverbial expression common in all Oriental lands, the Chinese add certain special characteristics of their own. The nature of their language, especially its capacity for epigram and antithesis, the wonderful body of

ancient literature, which has preserved and unified the written character and idiom, the vast stretches of history through which the nation has flourished, its present extent and comparative homogeneity,—these peculiarities of China give to its proverbial sayings an interest and importance which is unique.

In his volume *On the Lessons of Proverbs*, Archbishop Trench has well vindicated their importance, in words which deserve consideration:—

“The fact that they please the people, and have pleased them for ages—that they possess so vigorous a principle of life as to have maintained their ground, ever new and ever young, through all the centuries of a nation’s existence—nay, that many of them have pleased not one nation only, but many, so that they have made themselves a home in the most different lands—and, further, that they have, not a few of them, come down to us from remotest antiquity, borne safely upon the waters of that great stream of time which has swallowed so much beneath its waves,—all this, I think, may well make us pause should we be tempted to turn away from them with anything of indifference or disdain.

“And then, further, there is this to be considered, that some of the greatest poets, the profoundest philosophers, the most learned scholars, the most genial writers in every kind, have delighted in them, have made large and frequent use of them, have bestowed infinite labor on the gathering and elucidating of them. In a fastidious age, indeed, and one of false refinement, they may go nearly or quite out of use among the so-called upper classes. ‘No gentleman,’ says Lord Chesterfield, or ‘No man of fashion,’ as I think is his exact word, ‘ever uses a proverb.’ And with how fine a touch of nature Shakspeare makes Coriolanus, the man who with all his greatness is entirely devoid of all sympathy for the people, to utter his scorn of *them* in scorn of their proverbs and of their frequent employment of these :

Hang ’em !

They said, they were an-hungry, sigh’d forth proverbs ;—  
That, hunger broke stone walls ; that, dogs must eat ;  
That, meat was made for mouths ; that, the gods sent not  
Corn for the rich men only : With these shreds  
They vented their complainings.—CORIOLANUS, Act I., Sc. 1.

“But that they have always been dear to the true intellectual aristocracy of a nation, there is abundant evidence to prove. Take but these three names in evidence, which, though few, are in themselves a host. Aristotle made a collection of proverbs ; nor did he count that he was herein doing aught unworthy of his great reputation ; however some of his adversaries may have made this a charge against him. He is said to have been the first who did so, though many afterwards followed in the same path. Shakspeare loves them so well, that besides often citing them, and innumerable covert allusions, rapid side glances at them, which we are in danger of missing unless at home in the proverbs of England, several of his plays, as ‘Measure for Measure,’ ‘All’s well that ends well,’ have popular proverbs for their titles. And Cervantes, a name only inferior to Shakspeare, has not left us in doubt in respect of the affection with which he regarded them. Every reader of ‘Don Quixote’ will



remember his squire, who sometimes cannot open his mouth but there drop from it almost as many proverbs as words. I might name others who held the proverb in honor—men who, though they may not attain to these first three, are yet deservedly accounted great; as Plautus, the most genial of Latin poets; Rabelais and Montaigne, the two most original of French authors; and how often Fuller, whom Coleridge has styled the wittiest of writers, justifies this praise in his witty employment of some old proverb; nor can any thoroughly understand and enjoy ‘Hudibras,’ no one but will miss a multitude of its keenest allusions, who is not thoroughly familiar with the proverbial literature of England.”

What is a Chinese proverb? ‘The Serpent knows his own hole’ (長蟲窟籠長蟲知), therefore let us interrogate the wise Serpent. Even in proposing the question to a Chinese whose education might appear to fit him to give an intelligent reply, we are met by an uncertainty as to a suitable term.

The expression *su-hua* (俗話), with which the Chinese are apparently content, means “Common Talk.” How can any one seriously demand of a Chinese teacher a definition of “Common Talk?” Our embarrassment is not much diminished, if we vary the phrase to *su-yü* (俗語) and translate it “Common Sayings.” The comprehensiveness of any term of this nature is far too great for successful definition, and it is a definition of which we are in quest. The inherent difficulty in securing it is two-fold. In the first place, the Chinese language embraces within itself a great variety of what, for lack of a more suitable term, may be denominated “styles,” from the high classical to the rude village patois—from the lofty cedar of Lebanon with its head in the clouds to the hyssop that springeth out of the lowly wall; or, to vary the figure, from the granite boulder upon the summit of the Andes to the mixed alluvial deposit in the bed of the Amazon. And as the alluvial deposit may contain within itself some detritus of what was once solid granite, so the colloquial dialects may have here and there incorporated some fragments of the elevated and literary style.

That which is not literary is *su*, common or colloquial, in contradistinction to the classical. But when it happens that the classical becomes also popularly current, what are we to call *that*? It is not *su*, for it is classical; yet it is *su*, for it is common. No Chinese, however, would for an instant admit that anything classical can be “common or unclean.” Here is our first stumbling-block, and it is one of nomenclature.

In the second place, the Chinese themselves do not recognize a distinct class of expressions corresponding to what in English we designate as proverbs. By this is meant that when a Chinese gives to what we should call a "Proverb" a generic name *su-hua*, it is too general, and when he gives a specific name, it is too particular. Unaccustomed to generalization, the general and the particular occupy no such relations to each other in the Chinese mind as in ours. Is this a Proverb (*su-hua*)? we inquire of the native pundit; to which he perhaps replies vaguely that it is "a ready made expression" (現成的話). He does not mean that a proverb is not "ready made," nor that a "ready made" expression is not "common talk," but is struggling to convey the idea that the expression under discussion amounts to a Phrase, but does not fill his idea of a Proverb. Pursuing our researches, we are informed that the next expression is classical (書上的話). By this our informant does not mean that it is not perhaps also proverbial; but the fact that it is somewhere in one of the Books, overshadows in his mind every other consideration. Again the question is raised, and this time we are informed that the expression is part of a Verse (詩). The teacher does not in the least mean to imply that it is not also proverbial. But the fact that a particular arrangement of "level" and "oblique" tones, and a definite rhyme, form the guiding principle in the composition, is all of which he takes account. A proverb in verse is to him not a proverb, but a verse.

To our next example the teacher replies that this is an Antithetical Couplet. By this he means that antithesis and parallelism are the ruling forces in the composition. An antithetically balanced proverb is to him not a proverb, but a couplet (對字).

Again we consult our Oracle, and again we are informed that this is an Historical Allusion (典故). He does not say, be it observed, whether it is or is not proverbial. That point is not in mind. An historical proverb is to him not a proverb, but a splinter of history.

Again we venture to inquire if we have at length found a proverb, and are told that this is nothing but a provincialism (土話). To the teacher's mind the proverb of merely local currency, or perhaps intelligibility, is not a proverb, but a sample of patois or colloquialism.

Once more we raise our note of interrogation and learn—not that our saying is a proverb, but merely that it is some form of



“borrowing” either sense or sound—in fact, a Pun. A punning proverb is not so much a proverb as a pun, a banter, a linguistic straw with which to tickle the ear.

The classification of Chinese proverbs according to the subject, must prove a matter of considerable embarrassment, owing to the frequent uncertainty what the principal subject is, the diversity of subjects within a single sentence or couplet, and the circumstance that the apparent subject often becomes a matter of merely subsidiary importance, while the secondary, or applied use, is the only one to which attention is invited. For our present purposes Chinese proverbs may be arranged, partly according to their source, but mainly according to their form. Such a classification is of necessity somewhat inexact, and is not indeed exhaustive, yet it may serve better than any other to facilitate an examination of their contents. Upon this plan, Chinese proverbs may be distributed into the seven following classes:—

I. Quotations, or adaptations of quotations from the Chinese Classics.

II. Lines or couplets in a poetical form.

III. Antithetical couplets.

IV. Proverbs which contain allusions to historical, semi-historical, legendary, or mythical persons, or events.

V. Proverbs relating to specific places, or districts, or to persons or events of merely local importance.

VI. Puns, depending upon different meanings of the same word, or upon the resemblance between the sounds of different words.

VII. Miscellaneous proverbs, referable to none of the preceding classes.

Before proceeding to notice these several classes of proverbs in detail, certain general observations will be appropriate. It would be desirable if it were practicable, to determine the boundaries of the border lands to which the proverbial domain is contiguous. Simply to fix the latitude and longitude of a country is indeed to convey very little geographical information, but it is information which is somewhat necessary as a preliminary to anything else. Some of the difficulties of establishing any such boundaries will be illustrated as we proceed, but one of them confronts us at the very outset. A Chinese proverb is not the same thing as a phrase. The Chinese language abounds in “ready made” phrases of two, three,

four, or more characters, and in the absence of any line of demarcation between subject and predicate, noun, adjective, and verb, it is difficult to discriminate a phrase from a proverb, especially as we have not after all ascertained what a Chinese proverb is.

Let the patient reader run his eye over the following expressions:—*Oh'in ch'i shu hua* (琴棋書畫); *Kuei chü chun sheng* (規矩準繩); *T'ien kao ti hou* (天高地厚); *T'ung hsin t'ung te* (同心同德); *Te kuo ch'ieh kuo* (得過且過); *Oh' shao ch'eng to* (積少成多); *K'ao huo hsien jê* (篝火先熱); *Jen ting sheng t'ien* (人定勝天); *K'ou shih hsin fei* (口是心非); *Shui ch'ang ch'uan kao* (水長船高); *Chiang ch'ang hai shen* (江長海深); *Pu yu jen suan* (不由人算).

Here are a dozen phrases, or sentences, taken at random, which differ materially in their quality. The first two may be considered to be composed exclusively of nouns. All the rest, with one exception, consist of characters which in some way balance one another. Some contain phrases antithetical to one another, while the last is a predicate without a subject. Which of all these are "proverbs" and which are only phrases?

In Vol. II. of Doolittle's *Vocabulary and Handbook of the Chinese Language*, are to be found (beginning at p. 562) eighteen pages of what are termed Metaphorical and Proverbial sentences, beginning with two-character phrases and ending with irregular couplets containing between twenty and thirty characters. Whoever scans the early pages of this collection, will perceive that the attempt to decide where the mere phrase ends and where the proverb begins, is like the effort to answer the old puzzle how many grains of corn are required to make a heap.

#### THE NUMBER AND CURRENCY OF CHINESE PROVERBS.

The multiplication of proverbs resembles the multiplication of the human species—the phenomenon is common to every people, but among the Chinese it is carried to a point so prodigiously beyond all others as to distance and defy competition. A certain amount of acquaintance with the felicitous aptness of Chinese proverbs, and the apparently inexhaustible supply, leads at length to the conviction that as there is no point on the surface of the planet which may not be made the center of a perfect circle, so there can be no conceivable



situation in life, for which the proverbial philosophy of the Chinese cannot furnish some apposite citation.

Many years since the government of Great Britain thought it worth while to despatch a war-vessel on a four years' voyage around the world, not for the purpose of conquering new realms to be added to the British Empire, but merely to take deep sea soundings and to bring up from the bottom of the ocean mud and ooze for scientific analysis. No one seems to have complained that the expense of the cruise of the *Challenger* was wasted, since science gained what money could not buy.

In the following notes the reader will meet with little to reward his attention but handfuls of mud, raked up from miscellaneous ponds and seas of varying depth, the deposit, not infrequently, of widely distant ages. Whether it shall be found to contain anything worth the trouble of examination, may, perhaps, depend upon the kind of eyes with which it is examined. A microscope, even of a low power, reveals what the keenest unassisted vision would never detect.

Chinese proverbs are literally in the mouth of everyone, from the Emperor upon his throne to the woman grinding at the mill. At the capture of the city of Canton, a memorandum of a conversation between the Emperor Tao Kuang and the Governor-General of the provinces of Kuangtung and Kuangsi, fell into the hands of the British. His Majesty was represented to have quoted "the saying of the old women" that a thousand or ten thousand reckonings of men are not equal to one reckoning of Heaven (千算萬算,不如老天一算). Ministers of the Tsung-li Yamên, Presidents of the Six Boards, and Members of the Inner Council, as well as other officials of every rank, are well known to spice their conferences and their conversation with quotations from "the old women" as naturally and as unconsciously as they cite the Four Books. To say that the same is true of every rank of society, is simply to affirm that Common Talk (俗話) is common talk. When Emperors and Ministers quote "the old women," it is not to be wondered at that "the old women" quote one another. They do even more. The classical wisdom of the Ancients is the common heritage of all the sons and daughters of Han, from Emperors to old women, and one stratum of society can quote them as well as another. When the wind blows the grass bends (風行草偃). Those who are below imitate those who are

above (上行下效). An ignorant Chinese woman who knows not the simplest character (目不識丁) will quote an adaptation of a passage from the Book of Changes as naturally as the Emperor quoted "the old women."

There are undoubtedly some Chinese who as far surpass the bulk of their countrymen in their *penchant* for proverbial expression as in the gift of humor Sam Weller excelled the average London cabman. An occasional Chinese Sancho Panza does not, however, prove that other Chinese are not addicted to proverbs any more than Sam Weller's eminence as a humorist—supposing he had been created an Irishman—would prove that humor is not a national Irish trait. On the contrary, it is easier to produce and to put in circulation a score of popular jests than to coin and get into currency a single proverb. Weller's jests prove nothing either way as to the humor of his countrymen; while Panza's conversation shows that the Spanish language of his time was pervaded with proverbs as the atmosphere of Dulcinea's dwelling was pervaded with garlic.

It is difficult for children to understand why the little particles of dust which are seen floating in such compact masses in the stray sunbeams miscalled by children "dirty sunshine"—of a partly darkened room—should assume so regular a form. If they are told that the sunbeam by no means creates the moats, but simply reveals them, and that the whole room is as full of dust-particles as the minute area which the beam has traversed, they are amazed and incredulous. In order to verify the proposition, however, it is necessary to lift off the roof, when the "true inwardness" of the atmosphere appears. It is in like manner indispensable to remove the roof from the Chinese language before a clear perception can be gained of what is in circulation underneath.

The idolatry with which the works termed "Classical" are regarded, is balanced by a depreciation of everything which is not Classical. All such productions are *su* (俗), by which we are to understand that they are both common and vulgar. Chinese proverbial philosophy is so interwoven into the spoken language that no Chinese scholar can possibly ignore it altogether. But the moment it seems to lay any claim to be regarded as literature, he begins to despise it. Every educated Chinese is supposed to be a mammoth literary spider, able to spin out of his own bowels (肚子)



whatever he may need. Now a spider who should go about among his friends begging 'the loan of a few ounces of raw spider's web' would be looked upon as an entirely unprofessional insect. A Chinese scholar, therefore, regards a little collection of Antithetical Couplets for use in the New Year's decorations with much the same air with which an Oxford graduate might view the *Young Man's Complete Letter Writer*.

There are many Chinese books which contain short lists of proverbs, but it not infrequently appears as if the compilers were on the whole somewhat ashamed of the enterprise, and hence reduced their collection within very narrow limits.\* Of the collections of Chinese proverbs accessible to English readers, it is superfluous to refer to more than two, both because of the narrow scope of the earlier lists, and because their contents have been mainly absorbed by the latter.

Of these, the first is contained in Doolittle's *Handbook of the Chinese Language*, but instead of Collection, it should rather be termed a Dispersion. Under twelve of the eighty-five heads into which this lexicographical Hydra is parted, proverbs, couplets, phrases, and maxims are scattered as if by a literary dust-storm. Some of them are printed—for what reason it is extremely difficult to conjecture—in several different languages. There is nowhere any Index to them, and the quest of a sentence once found and again lost, resembles, in Chinese phrase, 'dragging the ocean for a kettle.' The aggregate number of sentences of the classes named amounts to more than three thousand—considerably exceeding the collection of Mr. Scarborough, where many of them reappear—but among them are several hundred which are in no sense proverbs, (and which are not indeed represented as such) and several scores of others are repeated in different places, some of them four and even five times. For this singular circumstance the Editor apologized, on the ground that he could not remember what he had already printed! Despite these defects, however, which are almost inevitable in so loose a compilation, the materials having been furnished by so many pens, a considerable amount of interesting and valuable matter has here found burial, and the translations

\* Cheap little books are sometimes to be met with, containing wood cuts, each illustrative of some well-known proverb. At the New Year's season, when the sale of all kinds of pictures is prodigious, entire sheets are to be seen wholly devoted to the same class of subjects.

with some conspicuous exceptions to be hereinafter noted, are in general good.\*

In Mr. Scarborough's "Collection of Chinese Proverbs" we have, for the first time, an orderly compilation, classified and indexed, and prefixed by a valuable Introduction, the result of much patient labor and occupying a place by itself.

#### THE VALUE OF CHINESE PROVERBS.

The value of Chinese proverbs has been well treated by Mr. Scarborough in his Introduction. To the observation of Sir John Davis there cited, that such sayings are of great value, inasmuch as they illustrate every grammatical law of the language, too little heed is frequently paid by students of Chinese. As helps to the study of the language, they have a function peculiarly their own. To a mere beginner, no doubt, they are of slight service, sometimes tending rather to bewilder and confound, but when once a certain familiarity with the spoken language is attained, they become invaluable. The idioms are often strongly marked, easy to catch and hard to forget, combined advantages in the study of the Chinese language of singular infrequency.

Even more important, however, is their value as exhibitions of Chinese modes of thought. A familiarity with the manner in which the Chinese mind acts, is much rarer than a creditable command of the spoken language, and of the two, the former is perhaps the more difficult acquisition. To accept everything which is to be found in any Chinese proverb as a trustworthy exponent of Chinese character and thought, would be a mistake, for some sayings are ironical†, and some flatly contradict others. But whatever the subject matter, or however extravagant the mode of expression, every Chinese proverb contributes something toward an apprehension of the point of view from which, and the lights in which, a great and

\* The *Ch'uan Chia Pao* (傳家寶) is perhaps the nearest Chinese analogue to Doolittle's *Handbook*, in the circumstance that each consists largely of miscellaneous matter, collected upon no other perceptible principle than that of coexistence in the brain of the compiler. Amid a mosaic of "Pearls," "Diamonds," "Jade," bits of botany, and a diverting little manual on the treatment of lying-in patients, we meet with a list of proverbs, which although pretentiously introduced as important recipes for the adjustment of one's conduct and the regulation of the family, turn out to be only about 240 in number.

† Take, for example, the following saying, which is somewhat in the vein of the Book of Ecclesiastes: "He that builds bridges and repairs roads, will become blind in both eyes; He that commits murder and arson, will enjoy long life."  
(修橋補路、雙瞎眼。殺人放火、得長命。)



ancient family of mankind looks upon the tangled web of human life, and of the construction which the experience of ages has led them to put upon its practical problems. Chinese proverbs contain an almost complete chart of human nature as the Chinese understand it; every shoal, rock, reef, and quicksand distinctly laid down. If the Chinese themselves do not avoid these dangers, it is not for lack of admonition, and not for want of opportunity to ascertain the precise nature of the perils of human environment.

A proverb has been defined as the fruit of the longest experience expressed in the fewest words. It is a Universal Major Premise, from which it is natural for Orientals to reason. Hence, with many Asiatic races a proverb is itself an argument, and no solicitude is entertained with regard to Undistributed Middles, or any other vices pertaining to a science of which nothing is known, and for which, were it known, nothing would be cared. It is sufficient that a generalization is condensed into a nutshell in a sentence of "arrowy brevity," which goes at once to the mark. Employed by the Chinese themselves in their happiest manner, many of their maxims resemble the diamond, compact, solid, incisive, light bearing.

The most profound acquaintance with Chinese literature may coexist with contempt for, or even ignorance of, colloquial proverbs. A mere tyro in Chinese may, however, grope and stumble in the dark; yet if in the effort to express a meaning, he lean upon a proverbial staff, or hobble upon a proverbial crutch, he is almost certain to fix the attention of his auditors. That which commends itself to the Chinese in such a case, is the readiness not simply to adopt their forms of expression, but to enter into their modes of thought.

#### THE COMPREHENSION AND TRANSLATION OF CHINESE PROVERBS.

The student of Chinese soon ascertains that this language is remarkable for its "Homophony," a quality which bears an euphonious name to denote a vicious thing. Homophony may be defined as that peculiarity of Chinese sounds, which, when they are heard, renders it difficult or impossible to determine what they mean. In Giles' Dictionary, for example, under the sound of *chi* are noted nearly 200 characters. Some of these are no doubt extremely rare, while many are met with only in books; but after all abatements upon this score, how is one to be certain when he hears the sound

*chi*, that any particular *chi* is intended, and not some one of fifty other *chi* sounds, either of which, for aught that he knows, may be as eligible as the one that happens first to come to mind? If the enclitic *erh* is appended, forming, by elision, the sound *chi'rh* (jeer), his uncertainty is not much diminished. For this new sound may be not only the product of *chi* and *erh*, but it may likewise have resulted from the violent impact of *chin* and *erh* (*chin'rh*), as well as from a union of *chih* and *erh*, or it may perhaps prove to be the unelided sound *chieh*.

Do not tease us, kind reader, by reminding us of the devices called tones, which differentiate characters otherwise of the same sound. That mariners should be able to discriminate the four cardinal and all other intermediate points by means of a magnetic compass, is well. But suppose it were found by experience to be a peculiarity of all binnacles made at Hamburg that the Greenwich north became north-east, while in all Lisbon instruments the needle pointed only and always south-south-west, and in such as were produced in Baltimore east-by-north? Upon these terms it is to be feared that Naval Courts of Inquiry might be even more numerous than at present. Yet this suppositious case is perfectly analagous to daily experience of Chinese tones. The Peking *shang-p'ing* (high level) is high, while eighty miles distant the Tientsin *shang-p'ing* is the lowest sound which can be uttered aloud. The *hsia-p'ing* in regions but a short distance from the capital, is what its name does not imply, a distinct downward inflection, while in Peking it is not down, and is not level. Not only do tones vary in adjacent districts and towns, but the natives of certain cities profess to determine by his tones alone from which particular quarter of the city a speaker comes, for his speech bewrayeth him.

If the spoken language were as confusing as from such data one would suppose it to be, perfect comprehension of strangers from a distance would be of the rarest.\* Great, however, as the embarrass-

\* The strange notions current in regard to the mutual incomprehensibility of Chinese in communication are illustrated by the statement of a naval surgeon more than half a century ago, which has been often quoted as an example of foreign misapprehension of "things Chinese." He affirmed that the poverty of the oral language was such that the Chinese will scarcely answer the most simple question unless it is expressed in writing! "This poverty of language obliges the Chinese to appear a very grave reserved people, as they sit together frequently for a length of time without exchanging a word; and when they do speak, the sense is made out rather by observing the countenance and action of the limbs than by regulated sounds."



ments undoubtedly are, they are relieved by the phrase-structure of the colloquial and by other contrivances with which we have no present concern. Our only purpose is to set in a clear light the causes of the frequent difficulty in comprehending Chinese proverbs and other sayings—difficulties arising from homophony not only, but also those due to the employment of unusual idioms, to concise and inverted modes of expression, and to other causes not easily described.

It is difficult to equal in English the compactness and force of a Chinese proverb at its best, and to surpass it, is quite out of the question. This is strikingly shown by the facility with which English proverbs may often be turned into Chinese without injury to the 'sense, shortness, and salt.' For example: 'Out of the frying-pan into the fire' (出鍋入火). 'Rats desert a sinking ship' (船沉鼠跑), like the Chinese saying: 'When the water fails the fish fly' (水盡魚飛). Or take the familiar lines of Rabelais: "The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be; The devil was well, the devil a monk was he," which may be paraphrased: (鬼王患病、悔罪念經、然後病好、將經扔掉).

On the other hand, there are many Chinese sayings which it is impossible to put into good English without the use of modes of expression, which in comparison with the Chinese, seem clumsy and verbose. For example the following: (會者不難、難者不會,) 'The knowing ones not hard, the hard ones not knowing.' Yet the Chinese is limpid. 'Those who know how to do a thing, do not find it difficult; those who find it difficult, know not how to do it.' It is this quality of extreme condensation which renders exact translations of the Chinese Classics into Western languages so laborious a task. In the Confucian Analects (Book I, Ch. vii) Dr. Legge renders the four characters 賢賢易色 as follows: 'If a man withdraws his mind from the love of beauty and applies it as sincerely to the love of the virtuous.' In Ch. ix of the same book the characters 慎終追遠 are translated: 'Let there be a careful attention to perform the funeral rites to parents, and let them be followed when long gone with the ceremonies of sacrifice.'

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In other words this intelligent and observant traveller took the Chinese for a nation of deaf mutes, illustrating on a vast scale the Chinese proverb that when a deaf man instructs a dumb man, one of them does not know how to speak, and the other does not know how to hear. (聾子教啞吧一個不會說的一個不會聽的)

In the Great Learning (Ch. x) the expression *lao lao* (老老) is expanded into: 'Behave to the aged as the aged should be behaved to;' while in another place in the Analects (Book xvi, Ch. x) 33 Chinese characters when melted down into English fill up 136 words!

There are many English proverbs which have almost exact counterparts in Chinese, and the same is true of some of the Maxims of Solomon. What, for example, could be more perfect than the correspondence between Ecclesiastes i: 7. "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full," and the Chinese saying: (quoted in Doolittle, p. 489, and in Scarborough, No. 2507) (萬川歸海、而海不盈).

The compiler of the Book of Kings informs us that Solomon "spake"—by which he probably meant composed—three thousand proverbs, but a very small fraction of which, however, have been preserved. Whether he may have had predecessors or successors in the compilation of his maxims, we have no means of ascertaining. It is certain that in China a collection of the size of Solomon's would be "nothing accounted of."

To collect everything in the Chinese language which would illustrate the subject in hand, is as obviously impossible as to dredge over every square foot of the bottom of the ocean, and would be equally useless. Specimens of each principal variety may serve the reader's turn, as well as if he were spattered from head to foot with the oceanic mass of material at his disposal.

The Chinese language is a field of continental area. However skilful or scientific a traveler may be, however accurate the topographical and general knowledge which he may acquire of a country, that he should be acquainted with the caliber and direction of the hole of every field-mouse and ground lizard, is a physical impossibility. 'The mighty dragon is no match for the native serpent' (強龍難壓地頭蛇).

The Chinese language may itself be likened to a serpent. Suppose one of these reptiles for the first time brought to light. Imagine the bewilderment of its discoverers as to its means of locomotion. Feet, wings, and fins it has visibly none. All theory and antecedent probability would seem to be against its power of any successful motion, except perhaps rotation on its axis like a log. Yet while his critics are deciding that nature in this case has produced a complete failure, the serpent, disregarding theory and



by the mere power of vermicular impulses and peristaltic contractions, has glided into a crevice with a swiftness which to the beholder is confounding. A tongue which ignores all discriminations of human language hitherto considered indispensable, with no distinction of gender, number, and case in its nouns, no voice, mode, tense, number and person in its verbs—no certainty, in fact, as to what are nouns and what are verbs, the same words serving indiscriminately for both—no recognition of the different offices of words (“parts of speech”), a tongue in which the phrases ‘solid’ and ‘hollow’ (虛、寔), ‘dead’ and ‘alive’ (死、活) form the single key to all the grammar which is recognized by those who speak it—what are we to expect of such a language as *that*? Yet, not to institute elaborate comparisons (after the manner of Dr. Gutzlaff) between the Chinese and the Greek, while the former is undeniably deficient in precision, it exhibits a copiousness and flexibility which challenges comparison with any other language. To discuss these features in themselves is, however, far from our present purpose, which is simply to direct attention to their significance as exhibiting the resources of the Chinese as a vehicle for compressing, obscuring, or even totally concealing human thought.

“It is of the essence of proverbial speech,” remarks a thoughtful writer, “that it detaches itself from particular occasions, that it has a capacity for various applications and a fitness for permanent use, and embraces large meanings within narrow limits.” In this *swivel* faculty, or freedom of motion and readiness to be turned in any direction, Chinese proverbs have no equals. It is due to this characteristic that it is difficult to be certain that a Chinese expression is completely understood. A Chinese who has never heard it before, may not improbably discover new applications and significance in an expression which upon the surface appears perfectly unambiguous.

These qualities of Chinese speech, and the facility with which expressions may be misapprehended, may be best illustrated by examples. Let us take the perfectly simple sentence: ‘Ride a horse to catch a horse’ (騎馬找馬). The *natural* meaning of this expression would seem to be, adaptation of means to end, a thief to catch a thief, to fight the devil with fire, capturing elephants with an elephant (拏象跑象). Probably not one foreigner in ten would think of its use as an example of absence of mind (like our

case of the individual who put his umbrella to bed and himself stood up behind the door) to search for the very animal you are riding. (So Mr. Scarborough rightly gives it, No. 626). Another quite different use of the saying is, however, very common, viz., to accept an undesirable situation temporarily with a view to something better—riding the inferior beast only until a more suitable one is available.

The difference of usage, and consequent uncertainty in regard to the notation of many common Chinese characters, gives rise to 'various readings,' sometimes as arbitrary as those in any other language, as in the phrases from Hamlet, "to the manner (manor) born," "I (eye) shall not look upon his like again."

Errors arising from mistaking one character for another are common. Thus in Mr. Scarborough's list (No. 1164) we have the saying: "Though nine times you present an accusation, the last must agree with the first" (九狀不離原詞). This is merely a mistake due to homophony. The correct reading is: 久狀不離原詞. *i.e.*, A lawsuit, however protracted, can never go beyond the original documents.

So likewise in No. 862, The larger fishes impose upon the shrimps and the shrimps in turn impose on the clay (大魚欺蝦, 蝦欺泥巴). What is it to "impose on the clay?" The copyist has fallen into error, and a better text reads: 大魚吃小魚, 小魚吃水蟲, 水蟲吃草泥. 'The large fish eat the small fish; the small fish eat the water insects; the water insects eat water plants and mud,' a saying which contains a compendious and accurate description of the relation between the higher officials, the lower officials, and the people of China, a relation to which the lines of Swift are singularly applicable:—

"So, naturalists observe, a flea  
Has smaller fleas that on him prey;  
And these have smaller still to bite 'em;  
And so proceed *ad infinitum*."

The effort to apprehend the full bearing of a Chinese sentence at the first hearing, resembles the attempt to solve a fresh conundrum off hand, for even if the answer is correct, there is no means of proving it to be so, while the chances of lighting upon the correct answer are often tenuous in the extreme. Witness the following: 千嘴鴿鷄、一嘴輸. He who has never heard this phrase, will



be a good guesser if he interprets it aright at the very first hearing. The ideal fighting quail, we are to suppose, is capable of giving, say, a thousand pecks with his bill before he is exhausted. This superiority distances all competition; but upon some unlucky occasion the bird of a thousand rounds capacity meets with an opponent so entirely beyond himself in fighting power that he finds himself vanquished at the very first blow. Hence the proverb becomes equivalent to the adage: 'There are always plenty of other able men' (能人背後有能人.).

Almost every writer who touches upon the difficulties of the Chinese language, adorns his tale with illustrations of the fatal facility with which an inexperienced speaker, struggling to express a particular idea, may—owing to the bewilderments of homophony and the puzzle of tones—succeed only in conveying to his hearer another idea, utterly incongruous with his intended meaning. These examples of slips of the tongue, may be appropriately matched by slips of the ear, slips which are the prerogative not of the beginner only, but of nearly all foreigners who wrestle with Chinese speech. Of misunderstandings arising from ambiguity of expression, it would be unfair in this connection to take account, since such traps waylay the unwary in every language—although the lack of tense distinctions in verbs renders such errors especially frequent in Chinese. For example a Chinese teacher reported that of a certain number of persons expected on a particular day, "not one came" (一個沒來). Here the ambiguity was precisely like that in the puzzle with which children are confounded when told that a certain man had nine sons and had "never seen one of them"—the youngest, that is to say, born when the father was absent. What the teacher intended to say, was that of the persons looked for, *one did not come* (有一個沒來).

It is homophonous pitfalls to which special reference is now made, over a few of which the reader is hereby invited to stumble. "I have just heard," said a speaker of excellent Chinese, "an expression which is exactly what I wanted." Two sets of chair coolies disputed as to the route, and one said to the other: "You go according to your light (*liang*), and I will go according to mine,"—in other words: Let every tub stand on its own bottom. What the coolie actually said, however, was nothing of the kind, but simply this: "You take your chair (*liang*) and

go along with you, and I will take mine" (你走你的輻, 我走我的輻.)

Here is another example: As heard: 父子英雄, 二好漢. 'Father and son both brave, two manly men.' As spoken: 爹是英雄, 兒好漢. 'When the father is brave, the son is a true man.'

Or still another: As heard (with one ear): 世人多, 出是非多, *i.e.*, Where there are many persons, there is sure to be much that is wrong. As heard (with the other ear—both wrong): 世人多求, 是非多, *i.e.*, Those who ask for too much, find that everything goes amiss, and as a final result, the more faults they commit (出是非多). Each of these meanings gives a good sense, and although the first is redundant in expression, so far as the Chinese goes, it is unobjectionable. Each is, however, far from being what the Chinese themselves say, as witness the following couplet found in the *Ming Hsien Chi* (名賢集): 衣服破時, 賓客少. 識人多處, 是非多. 'When one's clothes are torn, he will have few guests; when one knows many people, there are sure to be many errors.'

The following couplet is from the same source: 雨裏深山, 雪裏烟. 看事容易, 做事難. Here the second line is self-luminous, resembling the proverb: It is easy to look at embroidery, but hard to work it (看花容易, 綉花難.). The first line, however, may not improbably remain a perfect enigma, after mature contemplation of which, it might seem not unnatural to conclude that it was prefixed simply to make a rhyme (such as it is), as if in a nursery "Bab ballad" one were to say, or sing:

'The ram's on the mountain, The cat's in the bran,  
If you wish to be happy, Then be a good man.'

The clew is, however, perfectly simple. The moralist is illustrating his point by reference to the inspection of drawings. It is easy to criticize the delineation of distant mountains seen through an intervening shower, or that of snow falling in a smoky atmosphere; but let the critic himself undertake the task of the representation, and he will discover that while "It is easy to look at a piece of work, it is hard to execute it" (看事容易, 做事難.).

The employment of a long sentence as an adjective, does not tend to facilitate its comprehension; as for example when we hear that an impudent person "came forward with a new-born-calf-not-afraid-of-a-tiger air" (初生犢兒, 不怕虎的樣式來.), where the adjective is the first line of a couplet, of which the second line



declares, that (although so bold when without experience, yet) by the time his horns have grown out, he will be terrified even by a wolf (長出犄角, 倒怕狼.).

Some of the most apparently enigmatical Chinese sayings belong to that large class in which the obscurity arises, not from any particular expression, but from the circumstance that something vitally important to the sense is left to be supplied, a something to which the unhappy auditor (or reader) may have no possible clew. What, *e.g.*, is one to make of the following proposition:—

‘When the ground is clean and the threshing floor bare,  
The teacher’s heart is filled with care’ (地淨場光, 先生發荒.).

We are to understand that the state of things described is late in the autumn. About the time of the winter solstice the teacher is busy (冬至先生忙), for this is the period when his patrons will engage him, if at all, for the next year. School-teachers are proverbially poor in China: ‘It is impossible to be worse off than a school-workman’ (最苦不過的是教書匠). ‘He that has three hundred weight of grain will never be a king over little children’ (家有三石糧, 不作孩子王.). It is his anxiety, lest he find no employment for the next year, that disturbs the peace of the early winter. Nothing of this is, however, obvious upon the surface.

Equally obscure is the following: ‘The poor man as soon as he hears the first cry of the peddler of candied pears, starts with fright’ (賣糖梨的吆喝了一聲, 窮漢吃了一驚.). Why? What can there be in the street call of a candy seller adapted to inspire terror? The reader is expected to have in mind the circumstance that pears do not ripen until late in the autumn, that pears are not candied until they are ripe, that by the time pears are ripe and are candied and are vended, cold weather approaches, and the poor man who is in a chronic condition of unreadiness for that season is reminded that the chilling blasts of winter are at hand, and that his family have no wadded garments! It is not without reason that M. Callery observes that ‘Every Chinese inscription resembles the Apocalypse, in that it cannot be understood without a commentary.’

The discovery of the microscopist that the mosquito is infested with parasites, is welcomed with a note of joy by an exasperated public. The knowledge that tens of thousands to whom English is vernacular, are all their lifetime subject to the bondage of the

orthographical “e and i puzzle” (receive, believe, etc.) is sweet satisfaction to many a bewildered foreigner. Let us, in like manner, rejoice to be assured that the Chinese find many stumbling-blocks in their own language. A Chinese teacher whose mind was a warehouse of proverbial sayings, was requested to note down a sentence which he had never heard, to wit: 養船如共戲, *i.e.*, Keeping a boat [with a large crew to support, all of whom are idle while the boat is waiting for business, and during the winter while there is no business] is as expensive as managing a theatre [the players in which are often out of employment]. The following was the surprising form in which the aphorism emerged: 洋船入公戲, ‘A foreign boat entering a public theatre!’ three out of the five characters having been misconstrued, and the phrase, as a whole, hopelessly misunderstood.

How many students have been puzzled by the strange statement: ‘What is worn is clothing, what dies is a wife’ (穿了是衣, 死了是妻). To this adage the most appropriate response would seem to be that of the inebriated citizen who laboriously spelled out the words of a hardware dealer’s sign: “Iron sinks—all sizes.” “Well, who says it don’t?” That clothing is apparel, and that wives are mortal, no one is prepared to deny. But what of it? The apparent platitude assumes, however, a more rational appearance when we are informed that the meaning is merely: When your clothing is worn out (so as to be of no service to any one else), it may be said to be *your* clothing; when one’s wife is once dead, she is irrevocably one’s wife (for she cannot remarry and become the wife of another\*). Nothing, in other words, can be called our own until we have used it up. It is truly refreshing to notice how smoothly the Chinese language glides over difficulties of expression. In this phrase the personal pronouns are the most important words, and they are rendered emphatic, not by a position at the beginning or close of the sentence as in classical tongues, but by being altogether omitted. It is left to the reader’s (or hearer’s) option to supply the deficiency.

Here is another dark saying: 緊湊的莊稼, 磨蹭的買賣. Of this sentence we have seen a translation in print as follows: “Forcing the crops, makes a dull market,” a translation which the writer

\* This meaning is made clear in a different version: 穿破纔是衣, 到老纔是妻, *i.e.*, “Worn out it is clothing, when old ’tis a wife.”



confesses to be a copyright of his own, with no prospect of an infringement. Yet the clew is simple. The business of the crops must be urged forward (in planting or reaping time), but traffic must wait on the buyer. In other words, some things require despatch, and others demand patience—act according to circumstances (隨機應變). In this sentence it is the absence of the verb *shih* (是) which produces the misconception, and perhaps throws the listener completely off the scent.

The words 天不愛道、地不愛寶, from the Book of Rites, would seem as little liable to misconstruction as any other sentence of the same length, in which a word capable of two senses is introduced. Yet we are informed upon good authority that a certain Commissioner of Customs affirmed the meaning to be that 'Heaven does not love doctrine, and that earth is not fond of precious things,' whatever *that* may signify. His "Teacher said so." What his teacher *must* have said, but what he did not however succeed in making his hearer comprehend, was that *ai* (愛) is equivalent to *ai-hsi* (愛惜), to be economical or grudging of, and that the expression simply means: 'Heaven is not sparing of doctrine, nor earth of treasure.'

In Williams' Dictionary, s.v. *yu* (又), we find the following: 又要馬兒好、又要馬兒不吃草, which is translated (as if the second character were *yu* [有]) as follows: "There are good horses, and there are horses which won't eat their straw, i.e., some things are cheap and good, while others are too dear." How such a meaning is extracted from these words it is difficult to understand, and scarcely less so to discover the relevancy of the explanation which is appended. The real signification is simple, and in the following version is unmistakeable: 又要好、又要巧、又要馬兒跑的好、又要馬兒不吃草., 'To demand that his horse possess good qualities, that in acquiring him he gain an advantage, that he should be a swift runner, and besides all this should eat nothing.' Mr. Scarborough (No. 1724) gives the shorter form with a correct translation.

The Chinese are fond of categorical lists, neatly numbered and labeled, referring to subjects and objects ranging through the whole 'diameter of being.' The *Ch'uan Chia Pao*, referred to above, contains a formidable collection of this sort, all of which has been translated and embodied in Doolittle's Handbook (pp. 389-399).

The following example belongs to the same general class: 'Do not in this life ask for the three hard things; good sons are the first hard thing, old age the second, and a long beard the third' (世上不求三難、好兒一難、高壽一難、長鬚一難). Almost exactly similar would appear to be the saying: 三子不全, which in Williams' Dictionary, s. v. *san* (三) is translated: "You cannot have all the *tsu*, viz., 兒子 sons, 銀子 wealth, and 鬚子 a beard," i.e., these constitute a combination of felicity which it would be unreasonable to expect to unite in the possession of any one person. Yet although this interpretation is natural and legitimate, it quite fails to bring out the idea involved. The following version clearly expresses the true meaning: 人生最難得的三子全、鬚子大、兒子孝、銀子多, i.e., 'It is hard to possess the three *tsu* [not in combination, but] in perfection—a beard of great length, sons who are filial, and silver in abundance.'

In the Mandarin expansion of the Sacred Edicts (聖諭廣訓) under the section upon Filial Behavior, is quoted the proverb: 好殺了是他人、壞殺了是自己. Sir Thomas Wade, after more than fifteen years' acquaintance with Chinese, translated this sentence in the following amazing style: "It may be well enough to kill others, but to kill oneself is destruction." In Williams' Dictionary, s. v. 殺, the character *hao* (好) is taken as a verb, and the words are translated: "If you love the child greatly, yet he is another's; if you feel that he is a ruined child, still he is my own." It is almost superfluous to remark that the character *sha* (殺) does not in the least signify "to kill," but is only an adverb of degree, q.d., 'killingly' good or bad.\* The meaning is, that another's child, whatever his excellencies, is still the child of another, while one's own child, be he never so bad, is still one's own bone and flesh.

Mr. Scarborough's volume is not free from inaccurate translations. In the common proverb, in which by industrious perseverance an axe—or as another version has it, an iron rafter—is supposed to be rubbed down to an embroidery needle, Mr. Scarborough (No. 15) renders 成鍼 "sharp as a needle."

\* If one is to insist upon invariably rendering *sha* "to kill," what is to be made of the familiar saying: 好殺的婆家、不如娘家、好殺的月亮、不如白下, which means, *not* that "To be fond of killing one's mother-in-law, is inferior to an own mother," but that "The ideal mother-in-law ('killingly best') is not so good as one's own mother; the brightest moonlight does not equal daylight."



In another case (No. 1485) the characters *kung tao* 公道, 'Justice,' are translated 'Instinct'; while in No. 1739 *chi tsu* 雞子 (an egg—'chicken's son') is rendered 'Cock'!

In No. 102 we find: 退步思量事事難, which does not mean "shrink from considering, and all things grow hard," but 'Retreat and (merely) think about it, and everything will prove difficult.'

In No. 2226 we have the rendering: "If your wife is against it, do not get a concubine." The following is the Chinese text: 吃醋不討小, literally: 'Eating vinegar, do not seek for the small' [animalculæ?], which, it is safe to say, conveys no meaning whatever. Is it fair to presuppose in every casual reader an acquaintance with the figurative use of the expression *ch'ih ts'u*, 'sipping vinegar' (from an historical incident of the T'ang dynasty) as a synonym for domestic "unpleasantness," especially that between the wife and the concubines? To such a sentence a note should have been appended.

In No. 461: 恨鐵不成鋼 we have the translation: "Those who reject iron, cannot make steel." *Hên* (恨) does not mean to reject, but to feel resentment towards, and the meaning is not (as in the appended note) "that those who despise the effort to educate, will not have educated children," but that parents are (justly) indignant at (恨) their stupid children (鐵), because they will never come to anything (不成鋼). The figurative use of the words iron and steel is similar to that in another saying: 男兒無志, 鈍鐵無鋼. 'A son without ambition is blunt iron without steel.'†

No. 1734 is a perfect enigma: 在生是一根草, 死了是一個寶, which is explained thus: "Man alive's a trifle, like a blade of grass; Kill him though, and then see what will come to pass." This rendering of the second line, suggests the motto upon the cover of a patent medicine almanac, where a Virgilian quotation was followed by a "free translation," thus:—

"He comes to conquer and his skill

Is concentrated in the Brandreth pill!"

The obvious meaning of the proverb is that although a man may be worthless when alive (在生是一根草) yet if he is

\* Hence the saying, "If you do not taste her vinegar, she will be sure to turn you sour" (你不吃他的醋, 他必粘你的酸), supposed to be spoken by the husband to the wife, concerning the "small wife," as an exhortation to caution in behaviour. Used metaphorically it denotes that two rivals cannot both succeed (勢不兩立).

† Mr. Scarborough, No. 1268, gives a slightly different version of this proverb.

murdered, his family will demand satisfaction, and he will thus become to them a valuable capital. As in the case of No. 2226 already cited, an explanatory note would not in this case have been resented by the average reader as impertinent.

In No. 318 a perfectly obvious meaning is mistaken 隔行如隔山, "Every man to his calling. *Lit.*: Separate hong's are like separate hills." The character *ko* (隔) is translated as if it were the distributive *ko* (各), 'every,' 'each,' and even thus the rendering is far fetched, since there is no perceptible analogy between a trade and a mountain. The real meaning is that the boundary—or barrier—between different kinds of business is as difficult to pass as a range of mountains. The outsider (外行) knows no more of the secrets of the craft than he knows of another country. The same idea is expressed in another common saying: 同行是冤家, 隔行是力巴, 'Those of the same trade are rivals; one not of the trade is a green-horn.' The error in the translation of the proverb noted above is, however, a mere peccadillo, compared to the treatment which it receives in Doolittle's Handbook (p. 484), where the character *hang* (行) is read *hsing*, and the sentence is tortured into meaning (in two languages) "Modes of action are as various as the hills!"

In No. 1890: 有星不能照月, we have the rendering: "A star, however willing, cannot help the moon," and a note informs us that the word *hsing* (星) contains a play on the word *hsin* (信), which it resembles in sound. This seems to be an error throughout. Another reading is given in Doolittle (p. 326), where we find: 星勿能照月, "The stars cannot face the moon, *i.e.*, the people cannot compare with the king." The plain meaning seems to be that as the stars cannot add luster to the moon so the people cannot increase the glory of the Sovereign.

Under No. 2242, we find the following proverb: 殺人可恕, 情理難容, which is thus translated: "To excuse a murderer is abhorrent to reason." How the character *k'o* (可) is disposed of in this version, and what becomes of the balance between the two clauses of the proverb—which, as in the sentences that precede and follow, is clearly marked, even in the punctuation—does not appear. In this translation, however, Mr. Scarborough only follows Mr. Doolittle, who struggles with it in the following fashion (preserving nevertheless the antithesis): "Murder may be apologized for, or



excused, but it is impossible for reason to approve of it!" The saying is merely an hyperbole, and means: '*Murder can be condoned; but violations of common sense are unpardonable.*'

There are other instances in Mr. Doolittle's book in which errors of greater or less importance have been allowed, not to creep in, but rather to walk in and take a front seat, with their hats on and umbrellas spread!

Thus we find on p. 576: 船多不礙港、車多不礙路., 'The sea is not *worn* by ships, nor is a road impaired by travel,' the last part of which proposition is so obviously at variance with daily observation, especially in China, that it is to be wondered how it passed unchallenged. The true meaning is, of course (as in Mr. Scarborough, No. 324), that the multiplicity of ships need not blockade a channel, nor the number of carts obstruct a road, *i.e.*, when each keeps to his own place, there is room for all.

On the same page is the sentence: 寧可無了有、不可有了無, which is rendered: "Better not be than be nothing," whereas the idea clearly expressed in the text is that, 'It is better when destitute to acquire than after having acquired to become destitute,' preferable, in other words, to change one's condition for the better than for the worse.

On page 575 is the proverb: 弟兄雖親、財帛分明., which is translated: "Though brothers are very near relations, the difference of money separates them widely." *Fên ming* (分明) does not mean wide separation, but clear discrimination (so as to prevent quarrels), and the signification is the same as that of the following: 朋友高打牆、'Even friends should be separated by a high wall,' for it requires a superior man to avoid misunderstandings in regard to money 財帛分明大丈夫。

The expression: 驢唇不對馬嘴 (p. 681) is rendered: "A donkey's lips are not the *opposite* of a horse's mouth," whatever that may be. The meaning is merely that they do not *fit*—employed of language which is self-contradictory, or otherwise absurd.

In the Book of Rewards and Punishments (p. 248) occurs the oft quoted sentence: 是道則進、非道則退., which is correctly rendered, "If it is the right way, advance; if it is the wrong way, retire." On page 498, however, the same words (which have by this time ripened into an "Ancient Saying") are oddly translated: "To have virtuous principles, is to advance; to have none, is to retrograde."

On page 571: 當行厭當行, appears in the translation in this shape: "Potter envies potter." The correct rendering is given by Mr. Scarborough (No. 320), "Two of a trade hate one another." Still wider of the mark is the translation on p. 685 of the saying: 一世爲官、七世打磚, an adage based upon the popular notion of transmigration, and which is aimed at the rapacity of officials who in a lifetime commit crimes sufficient to condemn to seven generations of beggary. Beggars in China, as one daily perceives, often kneel in the streets, beating their bodies violently with a brick to excite compassion. Hence "to brick-beat" (打磚) is synonymous with 'to beg.' This obvious explanation is ignored, and we are confronted with the rendering: "For one generation to be an official; for seven to be a *brick-maker*!"

The following couplet occurs on p. 481: 羊有跪乳之恩、鴉有反哺之義, which is translated: "Even sheep kneel to give their milk, and crows feed their young by disgorging." It is not easy to see how, upon these terms, the *lambs* would get anything to eat until after they were weaned. Mr. Scarborough (No. 1906) gives the correct rendering, 'Lambs have the grace to suck kneeling.' The second clause is said to be referred, however, to the care taken by their young of the parent birds when old, rather than to "disgorging" by either for the sake of the others.

The phrase: 冷鍋裏冒熱氣, is used of one who suddenly bursts out into unprovoked ebullitions of wrath, like smoke from beneath a cold boiler. This proverb we find (upon page 680) rendered in the following singular manner: "In a cold kettle to assume (pretend) there is hot vapor!"

A similar struggle to make clear water turbid, appears on p. 182, where we have: 豬宰白講買, *i.e.*, "When the butcher has actually killed your pig, it is useless to discuss with him the price (since you must sell him the meat to get rid of it)." The translator, however, was resolved to make the word *pai* (白) an adjective agreeing with the late pig, which he achieves as follows: "The pig slaughtered (all stark and) white, then talk of a (different) price—to talk of another price after a thing is done," and the sentence is placed, "for convenience of arrangement," under the "motto": "Done, then talk," whereas it should rather be: 'Agree before you begin.'



The Chinese are fond of expressing a part only of a meaning as will be more fully illustrated, leaving the hearer to supply the clause understood. A frequent example of this class is the phrase: 丈母娘、誇女婿、可以, *i.e.*, 'A mother-in-law praising her son-in-law—he will do,' only so so (all the commendation that could be expected from such a quarter). The last two words are often omitted. "How does your business prosper?" "Oh, it's a mother-in-law's praise of a son-in-law," from which the hearer understands that the success is only tolerable. On page 687 we have this familiar idiom reduced to the following platitude: "For a mother-in-law to boast of her son-in-law is allowable!"

Like other languages, Chinese abounds in reduplicated forms of expression, as in the English phrases 'from pillar to post,' 'with might and main.' Of this class is the phrase: 依着籬笆、靠着牆, *i.e.*, without self-reliance, depending upon whatever is nearest. In Mr. Doolittle's translation, however (p. 686), the subject is transferred to the realm of mechanics, and advantage is taken of the occasion to prefix a negative and make the saying convey a lesson on the relative strength of materials: "Do not lean against a fence of bamboo sticks; lean against a wall!"

On page 577 occurs the saying: 男僧寺對着女僧寺、沒事也有事, rendered by Mr. Scarborough (No. 2383): "The monastery faces the nunnery; there's nothing in that, yet there may be." This seems to have proved a Sphynx' riddle, but the editor refuses to give it up, hence we have the following: "The priest lives near the priestess, *the idle are never busy!*" The real meaning of the saying is that everything may *look* innocent and pure (眼看着沒事), but it is practically certain that it is not so in fact.

Our list of examples—already perhaps too much protracted—shall fitly close with a single additional instance—*unum sed leonem*. It is to be found both in Doolittle's Handbook (p. 285) and in Mr. Scarborough's volume (No. 1123). Here is the couplet, the first line of which is a very common proverb: 一星之火、能燒萬頃之山。半句非言、誤損平生之德。 Of this we have in Doolittle the following translation: "The light of a single star tinges the mountains of many regions; The half sentence of an improper speech injures the virtue of a whole life." Mr. Scarborough copies this rendering with a trifling verbal variation: "As the light of a single

star tinges the mountains of many regions, so a single unguarded expression injures the virtue of a whole life." This translation is moreover expressly reaffirmed in the Introduction (p. xiv) in the words: "And how could the danger of unguarded speech be more beautifully expressed than in the following?"

But, 1. The antithesis requires a correspondence between the effect of a star on the mountains, and the influence of a wrong expression upon the life; the star merely "tinges," the unguarded expression *injures*. Thus "the danger of unguarded speech" is not at all "beautifully expressed."

2. *I hsing chih huo* (一星之火) cannot possibly mean "the light of a single star," but denotes a *spark of fire*.

3. *Shao* (燒) cannot possibly mean to 'tinge,' but to *burn*.

4. *Wan ch'ing chih shan* (萬頃之山) does not mean "the mountains of many regions," but a million acres ('be the same more or less'), so that the analogy between the widespread destruction caused by a single spark, and the far-reaching consequences of a single wrong word, is perfect.

#### VARIATIONS IN CHINESE PROVERBS.

The student of Chinese who essays to memorize Chinese sentences, whether gathered from books, or from the conversation of the natives, is beset with difficulties which place him at an immediate and conspicuous disadvantage with his surroundings. Among Western nations, the cultivation of a verbal memory is by no means in itself an end, and even where it appears to have been most cultivated, it may be doubted whether the success attained is equal to what in China would pass for failure. Under these disadvantages, he who ventures to launch upon the dangerous sea of quotation, will not improbably resemble the individual whose experience has been effectively described by the temperance orator, Mr. Gough, who struggled with the citation: "'A wise son catcheth the early worm'—no, that is not it—'an early bird maketh a glad father.'" "As soon as they open their mouths, foreigners make blunders" (外國人一開口、說亂), was the comment of an uneducated countryman upon a verbal slip, a class of slips which in Chinese are particularly difficult to avoid, since there is often no visible distinction between forms of expression to which usage has attached different, and perhaps radically opposite meanings



With their unapproachable verbal memory the Chinese combine a truly remarkable indifference to details, an indifference which does not in the least tend to diminish the difficulties of the student of their language. For example the Chinese care next to nothing for exactness of dates. For them it is enough that an individual flourished contemporaneously with some emperor, whose reign perhaps dragged through half a century. Whatever its historical merits may be, the sexagenary cycle would soon drive any Western nation to distraction. Imagine the Chronology of Europe to have been settled somewhere—say at the date of the founding of Rome—with the notation of successive years by Roman letters—year one as AB, followed by BC for the second year, CD for the third, and so on until the alphabet is exhausted, when all is begun over again, on the reiterative principle of The House that Jack built. The reader of some mediæval history ascertains therefrom that a certain event—for instance the crowning of Charlemagne—happened in the year MN. Unless he is possessed of some independent means of ascertaining how many alphabetic cycles distant this occurrence was from some point which to him is fixed, it is difficult to see how he is the wiser for his lately acquired intelligence. Having *no* fixed point from which to start, the Chinese are obliged to be content with their cart-wheel chronology, and do not perhaps perceive its defects. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at, that their historical knowledge is often totally lacking in perspective. Whatever anachronisms the reader may detect in these pages, he will be obliging enough to refer to this cause.

The same observations may be made—*mutatis mutandis*—with regard to wrong characters. What is a “wrong character?” Scholars write ‘wrong characters,’ well printed and ostensibly carefully edited books abound in ‘wrong characters,’ and Chinese teachers maintain a species of chronic sparring match with each other, as to what is, and what is not in certain characters the correct thing as to tone and shape. No wonder that the proverb says of the Literary Graduate, with the emphasis of sarcastic reiteration: ‘Flourishing Talent! Flourishing Talent! A mere Bag of false characters!’ (秀才, 秀才, 錯字的布袋.).

Citations from standard books, have of course a certain uniformity, though even these are sometimes recast into forms better adapted to popular speech than the original classical style. But it

is in the ordinary proverbs, or *su yǔ* that the unfettered license of Chinese quotation is most readily recognized. Proverbs which are not local are described as *current* (通行的), literally 'going through.' Now there are hundreds, and probably thousands of sayings, which do indeed 'go through' China, in the sense that they may everywhere be heard cited, while the *forms* in which they are heard in different localities, may vary widely. When such quotations are made, it is common to hear the remark: "That is not the way *we* say it," followed by a different version, which not improbably merely gratifies the Chinese instinct for useless variation, without in the least either adding to or subtracting from the sense. Thus, of one who has had observation, but no experience, the Chinese say: 'Although he has never eaten pork, he has seen a pig move' (沒吃過豬肉,也見過豬走). In a district where local usage has adopted the character which signifies 'to run' (跑) as the equivalent of any kind of progress, that word is substituted in place of *tsou* at the end of the proverb just quoted, spoiling the rhyme and adding nothing to the meaning.

The process by which other and more extensive changes have come about, may often be distinctly traced. The antithetical form of expression especially lends itself to such alterations. That each of the lines of a couplet should always be equally important, or equally adapted for popular citation, is scarcely to be expected. Probably not one reader in an hundred but is familiar with the line of Pope: "An honest man's the noblest work of God," but probably not one reader in ten could quote accurately—if indeed he could quote at all—the preceding line: "A wit's a feather, and a chief's a rod," which was obviously inserted, as critics have remarked, merely to serve as a foil for what was to follow. This example offers a complete analogue to what has befallen a large class of Chinese couplets long and short, in which the specific gravity of one line has kept the sentence upright, so that it has contrived to 'go through' on one leg. The specific levity, on the contrary, of the other clause, has caused its almost complete disappearance. Yet popular sayings in China, as the song affirms of 'kind words,' 'can never die,' and there is something about these one-legged expressions, which suggests at once to a Chinese, that there must have been another leg which is now lost, a conclusion at which he arrives through the same process of 'immediate inference' by



which a jockey is led to inquire for the 'other' footrest of a saddle which has but one stirrup, the unskilled foreigner innocently mistaking the phenomenon for a side-saddle. Still the single-limbed proverb 'goes on and on' (like the wooden leg in the ballad) until some quoter or hearer who has sufficient audacity undertakes to supply the deficiency and puts on a leg of his own manufacture.

A few examples will illustrate the innate capacities of variation, exhibited by Chinese proverbs. Many of them consist of two clauses, either of which may be quoted without the other. Thus 'The eggs which are laid will be like the fly' (甚麼蠅子下甚麼蛆), and 'The molded brick will be like the mold' (甚麼模子托甚麼坯). In the numberless cases of this sort, where the connection is merely one of analogy, and each sentence furnishes a complete idea by itself, one might for years hear each of them constantly quoted, and never suspect any 'pre-established harmony' between the parts.

Many sayings are met with in both longer and shorter forms, with no essential difference in meaning. Thus 'To add flowers to embroidery' (錦上添花), is a common figure denoting, *e.g.*, presents to the rich, who do not need them. 'To send charcoal in a snowstorm' (雪裏送炭), signifies timely assistance in extremities, as to the very poor. Linked together, with a clause added, these expressions form an antithetical proverb in constant use: 'He who sends charcoal in a snowstorm is the true Superior man' (雪裏送炭真君子); 'He who adds flowers to embroidery is a Mean man' (錦上添花是小人). So also: 'On public service one is not his own master' (當差由不了自己), Or, 'Let him who would be a man, avoid public service; a public servant is not his own master; go he must, however high the wind; and come he must, however great the rain' (爲人別當差, 當差不自在, 風裏也得去, 雨裏也得來).

'When the windlass stops, the garden bed is dry' (住了轆轤乾了畦), is condensed into: 'Windlass stopped—bed dry' (住轆乾畦).

Endless variations are caused by the introduction of 'empty words' and clauses which do not modify the sense. 'One branch moves, a hundred branches shake' (一枝動, 百枝搖). 'When one leaf moves, a hundred branches shake' (一葉動, 百枝搖).

'If one branch does not move, a hundred branches do not shake' (一枝不動,百枝不搖.).

Many Chinese proverbs have lines which have been otherwise married. 'Every sect has its doctrine, and every doctrine its sect' (門門有道,道道有門.); 'Every sect has its doctrine, and every grain its kernel' (門門有道,穀穀有米.); 'Every doctrine has its gate, every gate has its god' (道道有門,門門有神.). 'The loyal minister will not serve two masters; a virtuous woman cannot marry two husbands' (忠臣不事二主,烈女不嫁二夫.). 'A good horse cannot wear two saddles, nor a loyal minister serve two masters' (好馬不背雙鞍,忠臣不事二主.). 'Water which is distant cannot save from a fire which is near; a relative afar off is not equal to a near neighbor' (遠水救不了近火,遠親不如近鄰.). 'A relative at a distance is not so good as a near neighbor, and a near neighbor is not equal to the one just across the way' (遠親不如近鄰,近鄰不如對門.).

In some proverbs we meet with slight variations which essentially modify, or even reverse the sense. The Chinese, like other Orientals, are convinced of the inherent jealousy of women. 'It is impossible to be more jealous than a woman' (最妒不過的是婦人心.). Another version, however, is much stronger: 'It is impossible to be more malevolent than a woman' (最毒不過的是婦人心.).

'If a horse gets no wild grass, he never grows fat; if a man does not receive lucky help, he never grows rich' (馬不得野草不肥,人不得外財不富.). The alteration of a character brings out the Chinese superstition in regard to the value of nicknames: 'If a man has no nickname, he will never become wealthy; if a horse is not fed at night, he does not grow fat' (人不得外號不富,馬不得夜草不肥.). 'With an intelligent person you must be precise' (明人必用細講.), *i.e.*, because he wishes to know the matter in all aspects. "With an intelligent person you need not go into minutiae" (明人不用細講.), *i.e.*, he will take it all in at a glance. Cf. Prov. xxvi. 4-5. "Answer [not] a fool according to his folly."

#### THE COLLECTION AND THE STUDY OF CHINESE PROVERBS.

Our examination of the various classes of Chinese Proverbs may be fitly prefaced with a few suggestions as to the best method of studying them—suggestions which may be grouped under three simple radicals.



I. THE EAR.—Those who really wish to hear Chinese proverbs will find the air full of them, just as in summer the air is filled with flies, but in each case there is considerable difficulty in effecting a capture. He who knows how to hear, will hear intelligently; he who knows not how to hear, will hear only a *hot racket* (會聽的聽門道、不會聽的聽熱鬧).

The experienced proverb-hunter starts at the sound of the *su* (俗) character as the hare starts on hearing hounds. Proverbs are often to be *hunted* like hares. The proverb-hunter who hears a proverb, and who does not join in the chase, but endeavors to inquire after it at some later opportunity, is like him who allows a sleeping hare to escape him, and then attempts to catch it while running (現放着臥兔他不拿、要拿走兔). He who waits for a proverb to turn up of itself is like the man who saw a hare killed, while running swiftly, by dashing itself against a tree. The next day the simple-minded rustic returned to the foot of the same tree to wait for another hare! This incident—or fable—is epitomized in the saying, "Watching the tree while waiting for the hare" (守株待兔). But if the game, has really flown, it is better to give it up than to waste time in the chase. 'Only the silly dog chases the flying bird' (傻狗趕飛禽).

"Every one who has a proverb to contribute is worthy of attention, whether he be a mandarin or a coolie." As Confucius observed: 'Where there are three men walking, something may certainly be learned from some one of them' (三人行, 必有我師). And if, as will not improbably happen, their instructions disagree, do not, like the Chinese, go simply by the majority. "When three men divine follow the two who agree" (三人占, 從二人之言). Authorities are to be weighed, not counted. Listen to all, 'plucking a feather from every passing goose' (鷹過拔根毛), but follow no one absolutely.

Expect to be frequently mistaken and, as many of the examples already cited may attest, you will not always be disappointed.\* A foreign passenger on a Chinese houseboat heard the boatmen at the

\* Many years ago when the Governor-General of the Two Kuangs visited a British man-of-war in the harbour of Canton, the sailors hearing him constantly spoken of by the Cantonese as "*Tsung Tu*" (總督) supposed this to be his name and called him "*John Tuck*." At the time of the march of the British and French on Peking in 1860, the soldiers heard much said about the distinguished Tartar General who led the Chinese army, and whose name was San-ko-lin-sin. A rumour was prevalent in the camp that this individual was in reality an Irishman, who had deserted from the British ranks, and whose name was Sam Collinson,

beginning of a storm exclaim in an idiom like that in English, that it was 'raining great cats!' (下大貓), but what the man actually said turned out to be: 'Drop the large anchor!' (下大錨).

A number of Chinese overheard some foreigners singing an English song, of which the chorus ran: "To-morrow will you go?" To them it seemed a mysterious utterance reproduced in the Chinese characters: "T'ou mao jou wei liao kou" 偷貓肉喂了狗, i.e., "Stealing the cat's meat to feed the dog"!

Practice will soon sharpen the ears to hear what is worth hearing. In Chinese, as in other languages, to speak well is not so valuable an accomplishment as to listen well (會說的, 不如會聽的).

II.—THE MOUTH. The proverb-hunter should have (in a good sense) two tongues in his mouth; one to talk with and one with which to ask questions; "Tzu Kung asked Confucius how K'ung Wen came to get that title of *Wen* (Analects, v. 13). The Master said, 'He had an active mind and was fond of learning, and he was not ashamed to ask his inferiors. On these grounds he has been styled Wen'" (子貢問曰, 孔文子, 何以謂之文也, 子曰, 敏而好學, 不恥下問, 是以謂之文也). In the Historical Classic we are told that 'He who is fond of asking will have an abundance, while he who depends upon himself will have but little' (好問則裕, 自用則小).

'Exercising the arms and the legs is not so useful as exercising the mouth' (練胳膊, 練腿, 不如練嘴). Persistent questioning is better than fleet running' (腿勤不如嘴勤). 'For the persistent questioner there will emerge at last a golden colt' (嘴勤問出金馬駒兒來).

The tongue will make as many slips as the ear. 'Even the tiger has his naps' (老虎也有打盹的時候). 'Gods and fairies too have their blunders' (神仙也有一時錯).

In speaking, as in hearing, 'Practice makes perfect' (熟能生巧). and 'Use is second nature' (習慣成自然). 'Clean out your well three times, and its water will be sweet' (井修三遍吃甜水).

III. THE HAND.—The motto of Captain Cuttle is the one best adapted for the student of Chinese: "When found make a note of." 'Mere talk is empty, a pen mark is final' (說話爲空落筆爲實). 'The palest ink is better than the most capacious memory'



(廣記不如淡墨). Another form of this proverb is the following: 'A clever memory is not equal to a clumsy brush' (巧記不如拙寫).

Even the extraordinary verbal memories of the Chinese sometimes fail them. There is a story of a man who was loud in his praises of a couplet which he had lately seen. "And what was the couplet?" he was asked. He replied: "I have forgotten the first line, but the second line was 'Something, Something, Something Spring!'" (上一聯忘了下一聯是甚麼、甚麼、甚麼春).

Sometimes proverbs will seem to rain thickly; then is the time to hold up the dish. According to the Chinese, when a hedgehog finds fruit under a date tree (棗樹) he eats as much as he can, and then rolls himself over and over, until he has the dates which remain stuck on his quills, when he retires in triumph with his prize. Imitate the judicious hedgehog and carry off the plunder on your quill. Be especially careful to put down any sentence which you *know* will never be of any use to you. You will probably want it before the end of the next week, when otherwise you can only quote it as "Something, Something, Something Spring."

In one of his lectures in Colorado, Charles Kingsley stopped a large beetle which flew over him, and without for an instant suspending the thread of his discourse, held up the insect and attentively examined him to ascertain to which particular variety of coleopteron he must be assigned. This is precisely what is required of the student of Chinese. If he does not catch his linguistic beetles upon the wing, he does not catch them at all, and they disappear. Many of these winged words, moreover, instead of passing with the heaving, lumbering flight of the beetle, might rather be compared to the swift darting of a humming-bird, which leaves an impression that something—it is difficult to say what—has come, and is now hopelessly gone. A Chinese will often fire a perfectly unintelligible sentence at you, like a bullet, and immediately discharge after it a volley of small shot by way of explanation.

To capture a Chinese proverb on the wing is as much a matter of training as to catch a base-ball "on the fly." The inexperienced are likely to have their hands battered. It is better, therefore, although unprofessional, to have a little basket which will not let the ball escape. 'Collect at leisure to use in haste' (閒置忙用). A very common form of this proverb is: 閒時置下忙時用. The growth

of a collection in which *every* new saying is inserted, will for a time be rapid. 'Little will grow to much' (積少成多). 'The bits of fur from under the legs of many foxes, will in the end make a robe' (集腋成裘).

To say nothing of the copious collections of Chinese proverbs already in existence, the supply is practically inexhaustible. 'One can never drink all the wine that is for sale' (吃不盡沽來的酒).

*By persistently following out the clue afforded in Chinese proverbs, almost everything of interest relating to China and the Chinese will sooner or later come to light.* One thing leads to another (因此識彼), and all subjects are connected (觸類旁通). Experience will make it positively easy to understand without explanation that which at first appears comparatively or even superlatively incomprehensible. 'He who for three years has split knotty wood, is expert enough to select a grave yard site' (三年打柴,會看墳塋).

Above all things, be sure to have the most intelligent teacher at your command explain everything *by written notes* which is not perfectly clear. To him such occupation will seem beneath his dignity and unworthy of his scholarship. He will consider this employment as irrational as it would be to appoint Liu Pei a district magistrate—great abilities wasted on small affairs (劉備坐知縣,大材小用).

The truth is, however, that to write clear, concise, and exact explanations of Chinese proverbs, is a task beyond the powers of nine out of ten Chinese teachers. It requires considerable scholarship, historical and classical, and wide general information (雜學). To do it ideally well requires a man who, like Herr Teufelsdröckh, is Professor of Things in General. Much which a teacher would explain orally to the bewilderment and to the ultimate silencing of his pupil, he would never explain at all if set to do it with a pen, which in a manner compels him to ascertain what he thinks he means. 'He who is a good forgetter should seek for the remembering-pearl' (好忘急求記事珠). A note-book, annotated by a teacher who knows what he is about, is the 'pearl.' 'Clear knowledge is more valuable than profound knowledge' (精學更貴於博學).

In every country the keen-sighted and inquisitive foreigner is the terror of the intellectually torpid native. "What do they mean by saying 'As sure as eggs is eggs?'" says the foreigner to the speaker of English. The speaker of English does not know what they mean, but the question piques his own curiosity, his mind is



twisted into an interrogation point, and he pushes his inquiries until he finds that some suppose (with Prof. De Morgan) that this saying is a corruption of the logicians formula  $x$  is  $x$ , while others more plausibly refer it to the old practice of keeping score upon the walls of public houses, tallying the pints and quarts (the 'p's and q's' which the customer must 'mind') by crosses. If he dispute his reckoning, his landlord exclaims: "No mistake—sure as  $x$  is  $x$ ."

The Chinese teacher does not like to confess his ignorance. On any subject beyond classical ones, examination essays and the like, he has never learned to inquire. It is therefore not at all unlikely that he will absolutely manufacture out of his own head an explanation, which, though it may not be the correct one, is, he thinks, correct enough for his pupil, as Jerome affirmed of Paul's philological reasoning in the epistle to the Galatians (Chapter iii. 16) that while it was not in itself much of an argument, it was "good enough for the foolish Galatians!"

Many a Chinese teacher combines an inward contempt for the uncivilized Barbarian (化外的) whom he teaches, with an extreme blandness and civility (as *per* Book of Rites), mixed with a considerable percentage of flattery. His replies are not infrequently dictated by the same instinct as that of an Irish patient in a New York medical clinic, who was asked whether in certain states of the weather, a neuralgia from which he suffered, was not a "dull pain." "Yes," he replied, sincerely anxious to please the distinguished surgeon who proposed the inquiry, "a dool pain, *but mighty sharp!*" A Chinese teacher is often willing, if not solicitous, to have everything what you suppose it to be, and to have everything mean what you suppose it to mean, for thus he pleases and gets rid of you at one stroke.

Intellectual effort, in an Occidental sense of the term, is not the forte of an ordinary Chinese teacher. His reasoning is not that which Kant would have styled "pure reason;" it is oftener pure nonsense; but perhaps a high degree of mental activity is not to be expected of one who submits to such tiresome drudgery as dinning the rudiments of such a language as Chinese into the average foreign ear. For these reasons it is a mistake to pay too much attention to the *dicta* of any one teacher. Inquire of one to verify what another has said, and you will soon learn that 'things are not what they seem.' Take about your acquisitions, like bank bills,

to see if they will pass. One teacher will assent to everything which you may suggest, but himself suggest nothing. 'Too ready compliance is not to be trusted' (輕諾必寡信). Another will tell you that they do not use this expression *here* (but they do), and when next you yourself hear it used in his presence, and call his attention to the fact, he will gravely assure you that he never heard it before in his life!

When, finally, Eye, Ear, and Hand have been sufficiently practiced to work with some assurance of success, that which was at first mere drudgery will become positively interesting. The thorny jungle of the Chinese language will be found to contain many pleasant and refreshing spots, and these will tend to become more and more numerous, until one may hope eventually to realize that conception of the Master, expressed in the very opening sentence of the Confucian Analects: "Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application?" (子曰學而時習之不亦說乎).

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## CHAPTER II.

### *Quotations, or Adaptations of Quotations from the Classics and other Standard Books.*

**I**T is to be understood that a proverb is by no means the same thing as a mere quotation. The Chinese spoken language abounds in quotations more or less direct, not only from the books known as classical, but from multitudes of others, quotations many of which have been woven into the speech of every-day life, occasionally modified from the form in which they originally occurred the better to adapt them to current use, yet the same for 'substance of doctrine.' In this respect there is a certain resemblance between such classical citations and our own use of biblical quotations. There are, however, thousands of quotations perfectly familiar to the millions of scholars who have hidden the whole of the Thirteen Classics in their capacious memories, which would be no more appreciated by the unscholarly than so many lines from Pindar or from Horace. It is also to be borne in mind that owing to the strange system by which the classics are poured into the ear long before they find their way to the mind, many persons are able to recognize quotations by sound as something which they have once committed to memory, though they may be almost or altogether ignorant of their significance.

It is found convenient in English to have at hand such books as dictionaries of 'Familiar Quotations,' by means of which pearls which have been unstrung may be again brought up at a single dive. Chinese dictionaries of quotations would seem, however, to be more appropriately described as encyclopedias, to such an extent do they expand. The most familiar of all quotations, to-wit those from the Classics, are, moreover, so familiar to those who know them at all, that a compendium of them would be as useless as an index to the multiplication table.

When His Excellency *Yeh*, some time Governor-General of the Two Kuang provinces, was carried captive to India by the British, he was asked upon the voyage, why, instead of sitting all day in a

state of comparative torpor, he did not read something. To this he made the conclusive reply, that all the books in existence which are worth reading he already knew by heart! There is a proverbial admonition to beware of the man of one book; how much more is to be dreaded the individual who has not only swallowed four, nine, or thirteen books, but has spent the best part of his life in digesting them! To such persons slight indeed is the service of indices, glossaries, and concordances.

The line between mere quotations, and quotations which by the attrition of ages of constant use have been worn smooth into proverbial currency, like many other linguistic distinctions in Chinese, is a somewhat vague one, and perhaps no two persons would draw that line at the same place.

To the appended specimens of familiar classical citations, may be prefixed a few taken from two little books which occupy a unique place in the Chinese educational system, being the alphabet, primer, and first-reader of all Chinese lads—the Trimetrical Classic (三字經) of *Wang Po Hou* (王伯厚) and the Thousand Character Classic (千字文) of *Chou Hsing Szu* (周興嗣).

#### PROVERBS FROM THE TRIMETRICAL CLASSIC.

‘Men at their birth are by nature radically good’ (人之初, 性本善.). ‘In nature all approximate, but in practice widely diverge’ (性相近, 習相遠.). ‘Gems unwrought form nothing useful’ (玉不琢, 不成器.). ‘Men if they do not learn, will never know what is proper’ (人不學, 不知義.). ‘To rear and not educate, is a father’s fault’ (養不教, 父之過.). ‘To educate without severity, shows a teacher’s indolence’ (教不嚴, 師之情.). ‘Dogs watch by night, the cock announces the morning’ (犬守夜, 雞司晨.). ‘The silk-worm spins silk, the bee makes honey’ (蠶吐絲, 蜂釀蜜.). ‘If men do not learn, they are not equal to the brutes’ (人不學, 不如物.).

#### PROVERBS FROM THE MILLENARY CLASSIC.

‘Cold comes, heat goes; gather in autumn, store in winter’ (寒來暑往, 秋收冬藏.). ‘When a fault is known, it should be amended’ (知過必改.). ‘The streams flow and never pause’ (川流不息.). ‘A foot of jade is of no value; an inch of time should be highly prized’ (尺璧非寶, 寸陰是競.). ‘Harmonious above,



united below; the husband sings, the wife accompanies' (上和下睦, 夫唱婦隨.).

PROVERBS FROM THE CONFUCIAN ANALECTS.

'The princely man in his food does not seek to gratify his appetite, nor in his dwelling place does seek ease' (君子食無求飽, 居無求安.). 'Death and life are predetermined, riches and honor depend upon Heaven' (死生有命, 富貴在天.). 'All within the four seas are brothers' (四海之內皆兄弟.). 'From of old death has been the lot of all men' (自古皆有死.). 'A single expression makes a country prosperous' (一言興邦.). 'A single expression ruins a country' (一言喪邦.). 'The workman who wishes to do his work well, must first sharpen his tools' (工欲善其事, 必先利其器.). 'If a man take no thought for what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand' (人無遠慮, 必有近憂.). 'Specious words confound virtue' (巧言亂德.). 'Would you use an ox-knife to kill a fowl?' (割雞焉用牛刀.).

PROVERBS FROM THE GREAT LEARNING.

'Things have their root and their completion. Affairs have their end and their beginning' (物有本末, 事有終始.). 'Riches adorn a house, and virtue adorns a person' (富潤屋, 德潤身.). 'When the mind is enlarged, the body is at ease' (心廣體胖.). 'Virtue is the root; wealth is the result' (德者本也, 財者末也.). 'There is a highway for the production of wealth' (生財有大道.).

PROVERBIAL PHRASES FROM THE DOCTRINE OF THE MEAN.

None of the other "Four Books" and scarcely any of the thirteen classics approach the Doctrine of the Mean in the item of jejuneness, and (to the beginner) general incomprehensibility. Thus, while the proverb says of the Book of Odes, that he who has read it, knows how to talk (念過詩經會說話.), and of the Book of Changes, that he who has perused it, knows how to tell fortunes (念過易經會算卦.), of the *Chung Yung* it is not inaptly observed, that those who study it get beaten by their teachers until they groan (念中庸打的哼哼.). A treatise of this nature offers comparatively slight material for popular proverbs, and the number of such, considering the quantity of the Chinese text, is but limited.



'To stand erect in the midst, without leaning to either side' (中立而不倚). 'To go half way and stop' (半途而廢). 'In all things success depends on preparation, without it there is failure' (凡事豫則立,不豫則廢). 'There are three hundred rules of ceremony and three thousand rules of behavior' (禮儀三百,威儀三千). 'It is not gain that is gain, it is upright conduct that is gain' (不以利爲利,以義爲利).

#### PROVERBIAL SAYINGS FROM MENCIUS.

The brilliance and ingenuity of Mencius, with his singular aptness at illustration, have given proverbial currency to a very great number of his sayings—often, as in the case of other classical expressions, stripped of every superfluous word and polished smooth by ages of lingual friction.

'Those who (in time of battle) ran away fifty paces, laughing at those who ran an hundred paces' (五十步笑百步). 'Having seen animals alive, one cannot bear to see them die; having heard their dying cries, he cannot bear to eat their flesh' (見其生,不忍見其死,聞其聲,不忍食其肉). 'My strength is sufficient to lift three thousand catties, but not to lift one feather' (吾力足以舉百鈞,而不足以舉一羽). 'My eyesight is sharp enough to examine the point of an autumn hair, but I do not see a wagon-load of fuel' (明足以察秋毫之末,而不見輿薪). 'Climbing a tree to seek for fish' (緣木求魚). 'The small cannot oppose the great, the few cannot oppose the many, the weak cannot oppose the strong' (小不敵大,寡不敵衆,弱不敵強). 'There is no calamity and happiness which is not of one's own seeking' (禍福無不自己求之者). 'Opportunities given by heaven are not equal to the advantages afforded by the earth; the advantages afforded by the earth do not match the blessings accruing from harmony among men' (天時不如地利,地利不如人和). 'That was one time, and this is another' (彼一時此一時). 'If there were no superior men, there would be none to rule the country men; if there were no country men, there would be none to support the superior men' (無君子莫治野人,無野人莫養君子). 'Without rules there can be no perfection' (不以規矩,不成方圓), literally: 'Without the compass and the square, squares and circles cannot be formed.' 'There are cases of praise which could not be expected, and of blame when the person blamed

was seeking to be perfect' (有不虞之譽、有求全之毀.). 'There are not two suns in the sky, nor two sovereigns over the people' (天無二日、民無二王.). 'That which is done without man's doing it, is from heaven. That which happens without man's causing it to happen, is the decree of heaven' (莫之爲而爲者、天也。莫之致而致者、命也.). 'The feeling of pity is common to all men; the feeling of shame and dislike is common to all men; the feeling of reverence and respect is common to all; and the knowledge of right and wrong is common to all' (惻隱之心人皆有之。羞惡之心人皆有之。恭敬之心人皆有之。是非之心人皆有之.). 'When heaven sends calamities, it is possible to escape; when on occasions the calamity himself, it is no longer possible to live' (天作孽猶可違、自作孽不可活.). 'To nourish what is small at the expense of what is great' (養小以失大.). 'Those who follow that part of themselves which is great, are great men; those who follow that part which is little, are little men' (從其大體爲大人、從其小體爲小人.). 'Life grows out of sorrow and calamity, and death from ease and pleasure' (生於憂患、死於安樂.). 'Words which are simple, but far-reaching in meaning, are good words' (言近而指遠者、善言也.).

PROVERBIAL SAYINGS FROM THE BOOK OF CHANGES.

The general diagrammatic character of the Book of Changes, would seem to promise little of a quotable nature, yet it abounds in expressions which are woven into the language of every-day life.

'The family which stores up virtue, will have an exuberance of happiness; the family which stores up vice, will have an exuberance of calamity' (積善之家必有餘慶。積不善之家必有餘殃.). 'A ram plunging into a hedge' (羝羊觸藩.), i.e., advance and retreat equally difficult. '(Men) gather into classes, and inanimate objects divide into groups' ([人]以類聚、物以羣分.). 'Rejoicing in heaven, and understanding its decrees, there is no place for regret' (樂天知命故不憂.). 'If two persons are of the same mind, their sharpness can divide metal' (二人同心、其利斷金.). A common colloquial version of this saying is found in the proverb: 'When three men are of one heart, yellow earth is turned to gold' (三人同心、黃土變金.). 'Treating superiors with disrespect and inferiors with cruelty' (上慢下暴.). 'Careless concealment invites robbery; meretricious arts incite lust' (慢藏



誨盜、治容誨淫。‘Each gains his own place’ (各得其所。). ‘Why should there be any anxious thought and care in the world?’ (天下何思何慮。). ‘When the sun sets, the moon rises; when the moon sets, the sun rises’ (日往則月來、月往則日來。). ‘Reason will not act in vain’ (道不虛行。). ‘Alternately employing mildness and severity’ (迭用柔剛。). ‘Perversity necessarily involves difficulty’ (乖必有難。). ‘The path of the model man is on the increase, the path of the mean man is one of sorrow’ (君子道長、小人道憂。). ‘The path of the model man is on the increase, that of the mean man is on the decrease’ (君子道長、小人道消。). ‘[In the *P’i* 否 Diagram] The path of the mean man is on the increase, that of the model man is on the decrease’ (小人道長、君子道消。). ‘The sun and moon revolving, cold and heat alternate’ (日月運行、一寒一暑。). ‘When virtue is not stored up, fame cannot be attained; when wickedness is not accumulated, it does not destroy the body’ (善不積、不足以成名。惡不積、不足以滅身。).

PROVERBIAL PHRASES, ETC., FROM THE BOOK OF ODES.

The sententious elegance of the Book of Odes, renders its expressions particularly suitable for quotation among the educated classes, while the great variety of subjects of the odes, offers something suited, either originally or by a more or less facile adaptation, to nearly all imaginable circumstances. At the same time the poetical form, and the condensation of thought, often reduce such quotations rather to the rank of mere phrases.

‘Not a day when I do not think of it’ (靡日不思。). ‘A day without seeing him is like three months’ (一日不見如三月。). ‘Long life, without a limit’ (萬壽無疆。). ‘How is it in hewing an axe-handle? Without an axe it cannot be done. How is it in taking a wife? Without a go-between it cannot be done’ (伐柯伐柯、匪斧不克。娶妻如何、匪媒不得。). ‘Without weapons one does not dare attack a tiger; without a boat one dare not cross a river’ (不敢暴虎、不敢馮河。). ‘Apprehensive and careful, as if on the brink of a deep gulf, as if treading on thin ice’ (戰戰兢兢、如臨深淵、如履薄冰。). ‘What other men have in their minds, I can measure by reflection’ (他人有心、予忖度之。). ‘May it first rain on our public fields and afterwards come to our private ones’ (雨我公田、遂及我私。). ‘The acts of high Heaven have



neither sound nor smell' (上天之載。無聲無臭。). 'A flaw in a scepter of white jade may be ground away; but for a flaw in speech, nothing can be done' (白圭之玷尚可磨。斯言之玷不可爲。). 'He who depends on himself will attain the greatest happiness' (自求多福。).

This example and the preceding one as well, afford instances of the changes which are made in the popular quotation of familiar passages. In the former case, the words are generally spoken: *Yen hsing chih tien pu k'o wei* 言行之玷不可爲, 'for a flaw in deed or word there is no remedy.' In the latter passage, while the words quoted are not altered, the sense is modified. As they stand in the *Shih Ching* they signify: "This [harmony with the decree of Heaven] is the natural way [*tzu jan* 自然] to seek for happiness."

PROVERBIAL QUOTATIONS FROM THE BOOK OF RITES.

The Book of Rites (禮記) occupies a prominent place in Chinese civilization, and its dicta have in many instances become literally "household words." The constant repercussion of fragments of ancient ritual wisdom from mouth to mouth, has elevated them to the level of primary axioms of human thought. Thus, as to the behavior towards parents: 'On going out one's parents should be informed, on one's return they should first be seen' (出必告。反必面。). 'The rule for children towards parents, is to keep them warm in winter, cool in summer' (爲子之道。冬溫夏凊。). 'On entering a country, inquire what is forbidden; on entering a village, inquire what are the customs; on entering a private house, inquire for the personal names of the family' (入國問禁。入鄉問俗。入門問諱。). The object in view in the last inquiry, is similar to that of the young man at a boarding house, who desired to secure the recipe for a particular kind of pudding, "so as to be certain never to have any of it in the house." In China names are things—sacred things. Even a son must not speak his father's name (子不言父名。). The stranger informs himself what these *tabooed* names are, that he may ever after steer clear of them.

'Men and women when giving and receiving things from one another, should not touch each other' (男女授受不親。). 'The superior man guards his body, as if holding jade' (君子守身如執玉。). 'In a case of family mourning, if one cannot contribute anything, he should not inquire into the expenses; in a case of

severe illness, if one has nothing to present, he should not ask what would be relished' (吊喪不能賻, 莫問其所費。探病不能遺, 莫問其所欲。)

PROVERBIAL QUOTATIONS FROM THE SHU CHING, OR BOOK OF HISTORY.

'Heaven and Earth is the parent of all creatures; and of all creatures man is the most highly endowed' (惟天地萬物父母。惟人萬物之靈。). (The latter sentence is usually quoted 人爲萬物之靈, as found in the commentary on the Analects.) 'Heaven to protect the inferior people made for them rules, and made for them instructors' (天佑下民, 作之君, 作之師。). 'What the people desire, Heaven will assuredly comply with' (民之所欲, 天必從之。). 'The good man doing good, finds the day insufficient; the evil man doing evil, likewise finds the day insufficient' (吉人爲善, 惟日不足, 凶人爲不善, 亦惟日不足。). 'Divided in heart—divided in practice' (離心離德。). 'Heaven sees as my people see; Heaven hears as my people hear' (天視自我民視, 天聽自我民聽。). Like the saying, "The voice of the people is the voice of God." 'Where there is much merit there is a great reward' (功多有厚賞。). 'The hen does not announce the morning; the crowing of a hen in the morning indicates the subversion of the family' (牝雞無晨, 牝雞之晨, 惟家之索。). 'The son of Heaven is the parent of the people and the sovereign of the Empire' (天子作民父母, 以爲天下王。). 'A mound raised nine fathoms high—the work unfinished for lack of one basket of earth' (爲山九仞, 功虧一簣。). 'Accordance with the right, is good fortune; the following of the evil, is bad—the shadow and the echo' (惠迪吉, 從逆凶, 惟影響。). 'To give up one's own opinion and follow that of others, not oppressing the helpless, and not neglecting the straitened poor' (舍己從人, 不虐無告, 不費窮困。). 'The mind of man is dangerously prone to err; its affinity for the right way is small. Be discriminating, be undivided, that you may securely hold the Mean' (人心惟危, 道心惟微, 惟精惟一, 允執厥中。). 'The way of Heaven is to bless the good and to punish the bad' (天道福善禍淫。). 'On the doer of good he sends down all blessings, and on the doer of evil he sends all calamities' (作善降之百祥, 作不善降之百殃。). 'Good and evil do not wrongly befall men, because Heaven sends down misery or happiness, according to their conduct' (惟吉凶不僭在人, 惟



天降災祥在德。‘He employed others as (if their abilities were) his own; he was not slow to change his errors; he was very magnanimous and benevolent’ (用人惟己、改過不吝、克寬克仁。). ‘The people are the root of a country; when the root is firm, the country is tranquil’ (民惟邦本、本固邦寧。). ‘Superior men kept in obscurity, and mean men filling the offices; the people reject and will not protect him, Heaven is sending down calamities’ (君子在野、小人在位、民棄不保、天降之咎。). ‘Do not listen to unsubstantiated words, do not adopt undeliberated plans’ (無稽之言勿聽、弗詢之謀勿庸。). ‘When a fire blazes over the ridge of K’un, gems and stones are burned together’ (火炎崑岡、玉石俱焚。).

It will be observed that the foregoing quotations from the Classics, cover a very wide range. Those from the Four Books especially might have been greatly multiplied. The object in view has been merely to exemplify the wealth of material contained in these books as regards popular citations. Which of these phrases and sentences is to be regarded as a quotation current among scholars only, and which as a popular proverb, is a point of minor consequence. Citations of this class fill a place in Chinese peculiarly their own, and however familiar many of them have by long use been rendered, like the beasts seen by Peter in his vision, none of them must be called ‘common’ (俗), for they are all alike regarded as having descended from heaven.

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## CHAPTER III.

### *Antithetical Couplets.*

In Doolittle's "Vocabulary and Handbook" (Vol. II, p. 210) is a collection of Scrolls and Tablets in one or two sentences, varying in length from two characters to two dozen, which the editor comprehensively describes as "Couplets, Labels, Hangings, Distichs, Paralleled Aphorisms, Antithetical Sentences, or by whatever other name they may be known." Further on (p. 277) we meet with another collection of Antithetical Couplets, which we are told differ from the former, in that they are seldom if ever written out on wooden tablets, paper, or satin, and suspended on walls and doors. Not to dwell upon the precarious nature of a classification which depends merely upon the use or disuse of paste, it is sufficient to remark that if by a proverb is meant a 'common saying,' each list contains indubitable specimens of proverbs.

In the interesting Essay introductory to his Collection of Chinese Proverbs, Mr. Scarborough describes the antithetical couplet or *tui tzu* (對字) as one form of the proverb, a description which is quite correct if understood to mean that some antithetical couplets are proverbs, and not as implying that all such couplets are proverbial. In reference to this subject, Mr. Scarborough observes that, "the first and greatest law evident in the formation of Chinese proverbs is that of Parallelism." This also would be true if stated as a characteristic of some proverbs, but ceases to be accurate when magnified into a "law" which governs the formation of all proverbs, for it would be easy to cite hundreds of Chinese proverbs which have no more "parallelism" than is to be found in the English aphorisms, "A burnt child dreads the fire," or "A new broom sweeps clean."

The theory of the Chinese *tui tzu* is expressed in the name. It is the opposition of characters. Its essence is thesis and antithesis—antithesis between different tones and different meanings, resemblance in the relations between the characters in one clause and those in another clause. While children are yet in their most ductile intellectual condition, and as soon as they begin to appreciate the flavor of char-

acters, they are taught to set one against another. Small books are placed in the hands of the little pupil, in which he is compelled to recognize the fact that certain words have their "rhetorical opposites," which are confronted with one another, as Heaven and Earth (天地), Mountains and Streams (山川), Rivers and Seas (河海), etc., etc.

After a certain amount of practice in this direction, the scholar is instructed to devise suitable counterparts for two-character phrases which are given out by the teacher, 'level' tones to be opposed to 'oblique,' and one meaning to balance another. Thus the teacher writes 'Golden Bell' (金鐘), to which one scholar adds 'Jade Musical-stone' (玉磬), another 'Iron Tripod' (鐵鼎), etc.

From these simpler applications of the Chinese 'binomial theorem,' the pupil advances to combinations of three characters. The teacher writes: 'A three-foot sword' (三尺劍), *i. e.*, a valuable and trusty weapon. The scholar responds with, 'Five cart-loads of books' (五車書), *i. e.*, the outline measurement of the attainments in literature of a man of great learning. By the time this kind of practice has been carried up to seven characters in a line, the pupil is ready to begin to compose poetry. His constant drill has taught him to look upon every phrase as a combination which has its natural antithesis, as each move in a scientifically played game of chess has its proper rejoinder. The habit of always seeking for an antagonist to every expression, and of regarding a well rounded line in the light of a well-formed row of teeth—of no particular use except when opposed to another similar row—results at length in reducing the art of literary match-making to an instinct rather than an acquisition.

The national Chinese custom of turning a considerable part of their literature out of doors just before every New Year, posting over gates and upon door-panels citations from the classics and other books and couplets, old and new, of every imaginable description, makes this kind of composition familiar to every one. The universal use of the Chinese written character, especially in the form of scroll couplets, as an ornament, still further tends to popularize antithetical sentences. It must be evident that in a country where thousands, or perhaps millions of fresh couplets are produced every year, among the deposits of this annual overflow will naturally be found some addition to the number of Common Sayings. The genius of the



language, as already remarked, is such that Chinese proverbs are very easily made: indeed they may frequently be said to make themselves.

The construction of antithetical sentences affords a fertile field for Chinese ingenuity, a field to which we have nothing in English even remotely correspondent. A teacher might require his pupils to produce English couplets ending with such words as 'step,' 'month,' and 'window,' but when there are really no rhymes in existence, the competition is simply between different methods of disguising failure. In Chinese couplet-making, however, there is scope not only for great dexterity in the choice and adaptation of words, but for the highest skill in adjustment between the parts, and in catching at suggestions. For all this, the training of every student is supposed to have fitted him. Characters in Chinese novels are represented as dashing off verses with a 'flying pencil,' and there are many situations in actual life where the ability to furnish an appropriate response to a given line might make one's fortune, while the fatal inability to do so would as certainly mar it.

Illustrations of this practice are extremely abundant, a few specimens of which will suffice to exemplify the constructive difficulties which may be involved in the 'weaving' of Chinese couplets. Teachers test the resources of their pupils by putting forth a line, to which the latter are expected to write a suitable response. Thus, a master wrote: 門關金鎖鎖 'The door is shut and locked with a golden lock.' To this his pupil answered: 簾捲玉鈎鈎 'The screen is rolled and hooked with a jade hook.' Another teacher propounded the following: 石重船輕輕托重. 'The stone is heavy, the boat is light; the light supports the heavy.' To which a girl replied: 桅長尺短短量長. 'The mast is long, the foot-measure is short; the short measures the long.'

A Teacher who lived near a Customs' barrier gave to one of his pupils the following line to be matched:—

開關早、關關晚、放過客過關。

'They open the Pass early, they shut the Pass late, when they let the Travellers pass the Pass;'

To this the pupil replied:

出對易。對對難，請先生先對。

'To put forth a line is easy, to match the line to be matched is difficult, will the Teacher first match the line.'



The unlimited admiration bestowed upon successful antithesis as such—irrespective of any ulterior meaning—is so great that any one who has vanquished a particularly difficult sentence by producing one to match, is held in perpetual remembrance, as if he were a benefactor to his species. In the two following examples there is no apparent reason for enthusiastic approbation, yet one of them has been cherished ever since the Ming Dynasty. Some one proposed the line: 鞋幫繡鳳、鞋行鳳舞, 'The Phoenix embroidered upon the sides of the shoe; when the shoe advances, the Phoenix dances.' To which one Li Hsiao-t'ang responded: 扇面畫龍、扇擺龍飛, 'The Dragon drawn upon the face of a fan; when the fan shakes, the Dragon flies.' 'The cat sleeps on top of the house; when the wind blows, the hair moves, but the cat does not move' (貓臥房頭、風吹毛動貓不動). 'The serpent drinks from the midst of the tank; when the water immerses it, the tongue is wet but the serpent is not wet' (蛇飲池中、水浸舌濕蛇不濕).\*

A common mode of Chinese abuse is to call a person a Thing,† *Tung-hsi* (東西). Thus when a mother is angry with her daughter she says: 'A *fine* Thing you are!' (好東西) from which arises a proverb: 'A mother reviling her daughter—a good article' (娘罵閨女, 好東西), used of anything which is of superior quality. A common form of this proverb is, 'You are not a thing' (你不是東西). As the Chinese delight in suggesting an idea by another connected with it, or opposite to it, the phrase 'He is North and South' (他是南北) has the implied meaning: 'He is not a Thing' (他不是東西), and is, therefore, abusive. In the following Couplet, this phrase is introduced with this signification:—

到夏日穿冬衣。胡塗春秋。  
從南來往北去。混賬東西。

'On a Summer day to wear Winter clothing, is to be foolish as to Spring and Autumn; to come from the South and turn toward

\* No one with a well-balanced mind, can scan this couplet without acute mental anguish. "A single scrap of spoiled meat, taints the whole meal" (一塊臭肉滿鍋腥). The first character of the second line (*horresco referens*) is of the same tone as the first character in the first line, and a like deadly defect is manifested in the seventh character. It should have run, for example, thus: 虎飲池中、水浸鬚濕虎不濕, "The tiger drinks from the midst of the tank; when the water immerses it, his whiskers are wet, but the tiger is not wet."

† Yet the phrase *Jen-wu* (人物), "Men and Things," is applied to an individual in a favorable sense, as *Ta-jen-wu* (大人物), a person of some consequence

the North, is to be reckless as to East and West,—that is, a Muddle-headed Thing' (混賬東西).

Another Couplet of the same description, is local to *Shun Te Fu* (順德府), a city in Chihli, where there is a temple called the *Hsia Miao* (下廟) and where a certain District Magistrate went by the nickname of the Tall Dwarf (高矮子). One of the apartments in his yamên was known as the 'retiring hall' (退廳).

小大姐、上下廟。南北街前買東西。

高矮子、進退廳。冬夏夜裏看春秋。

'The little elder sister goes up to the *Hsia Miao*, in front of the North and South street to buy things; The Tall Dwarf enters the Retiring Hall in Winter and Summer by night, to read the Spring and Autumn Annals.'

The following Couplet embodies a statement, the truth of which is not confined to China:—

朋友、朋有、有則朋、不有則不朋、看破世界、難睜眼。

親戚、親齊、齊則親、不齊則不親、參透人情、暗點頭。

'Friends are friends that have property; if they have property, then they are Friends; if they have no property, then they are not Friends; he who sees the world as it is, finds it hard to open his eyes. Relatives are relatives when they are in equal circumstances; if their circumstances are equal, they are related; if their circumstances are unequal, then they are not relatives; he who sees through human feelings, secretly nods his head.'

The same idea is more briefly expressed in the following proverb: 'Relatives should have equality in condition; friends must be on a par in their property' (親戚親齊, 朋友同有).

The construction of antithetical couplets affords unlimited opportunities for that oblique and subterranean reproof in which the Chinese take so great pleasure. To administer a sharp rebuke while apparently merely rhapsodizing about the Dragon and the Phoenix, the Milky Way or the Great Northern Dipper, is Chinese literary high art. To see a person plunge his hand into a vessel which seems to be filled with clear water, and then to watch him receive a violent electric shock,—this is a source of happiness of a lofty order. If the response is as ingenious as the challenge, and not only turns the edge of the reproof, but while denying the allegation, "hurls it back upon the head of the alligator," this is



to set trickling a little rill of delight which may flow on and irrigate the hearts of twenty generations.

Many years ago an official named Li Ho-nien (who afterwards became Governor-General of sundry provinces) was in the province of Honan at an official headquarters. Another official who was staying at the same place, was an opium smoker, and rose late. Calling to him the little son of the latter, Mr. Li gave him one limb of a couplet, as follows: 紅日滿窗人未起, 'The red sun fills the windows, but the man is not yet risen.' To this the lad replied, with an audacity which, to the Chinese mind, is an infallible token of future greatness: 青雲得路我先登, 'The road to mount the dark cloud, I will first tread'; 'to tread the dark cloud' being a synonym for distinguished scholastic honors. The father of this lad finally became a Hanlin (in spite of his opium), and the lad himself became a *Chü jen* at the age of twenty, but has thus far climbed no higher on the 'azure cloud.'

A certain gentleman had a son who received a private education. A lad who was a servant in the family also studied under the same teacher as the son. One day the teacher praised the abilities of the servant lad to the master, who was more addicted to pleasure than to learning. He had a little concubine called 'Snow,' to whom he was excessively devoted, to the sorrow of his family, who were, however, unable to interfere. When the gentleman heard the young servant praised, he lightly replied, "So he has abilities, has he? Come, I will give him a line of a couplet to match;" whereupon he wrote the following: 綠水本無憂, 因風縐面. 'The green waters have really no sorrow; it is only the wind that wrinkles their face.' To this the little lad replied: 青山原不老, 爲雪白頭. 'The dark mountain is not naturally old; it is the Snow that whitens its head.' Upon this, the master was led to introspection, and reforms his behavior, as the subjects of such reproofs always do (in legends), while the young lad as such lads invariably do (in stories) rose to become a Minister of State.

During the present Dynasty there was a lad named *Chi Chün* (紀均), who was guilty of an impropriety. A female slave came into the room where he was, and he grasped her hand in flat defiance of the Book of Rites and of all known principles of social decorum. The boy was only nine years of age, but the girl made complaint to his mother, and the mother consulted her brother as



to the most suitable method of reproof. The boy's uncle undertook to reform him with one leg of a couplet, which he put forth as follows: 奴手爲拏。以後莫拏奴手。 'The character for *take*, is composed of Slave and Hand; hereafter do not take a slave's hand.' This cogent style of argument has, however, a double edge, as was painfully apparent when the lad retorted as follows: 人言是信。從今休信人言。 'The character for *believe*, is made up of Man and Word; henceforth never believe a man's word.' We are unhappily left in ignorance whether this lad became a Minister or a Mormon.

Many readers will recall Dr. O. W. Holmes' verses called an "Ode for a Social Meeting, with slight alterations by a Teetotaler." The following is a specimen stanza:—

"The purple-globed clusters their life-dews have bled;  
How sweet is the breath of the fragrance they shed!  
For summer's last roses lie hid in the wines  
That were garnered by maidens who laughed through the vines."

The erasures and interlineations of the "Teetotaler" modify the sentiment, until it takes the following shape:—

"The half-ripened apples their life-dews have bled;  
How sweet is the taste of the sugar of lead;  
For summer's rank poisons lie hid in the wines!!!  
That were garnered by stable-boys smoking long-nines."

For this kind of transformation of meaning, the Chinese couplet offers unrivalled facilities, as a single illustration will show. A Chinese school-teacher of our acquaintance had a neighbor who was a butcher. Like every one else, he bought a *tui tzu* to adorn his doors wherewithal, at the New Year's season. This was the distich which he posted up: 綿世澤莫如爲善好。振家聲還是讀書高。 'To make sure that successive generations shall be enriched by (Imperial) favor, there is nothing so good as the practice of Virtue; to render one's family famous, the loftiest method is still the pursuit of literature.' In a country where the slaughter of animals is suspended by official proclamation, whenever a scarcity of rain or snow is felt—with a view thus to propitiate by timely concessions the rain-producing Powers—the trade of a butcher is not likely to stand high. The Buddhist notions in regard to the sacredness of animal life, however disregarded, are widely current among the people. For a wicked butcher to put up a couplet of

this sort, was regarded by the School-master as a piece of gross impertinence, and he accordingly pasted over three of the characters emendations of his own, making it read as follows: 綿世澤莫如爲惡好。振家聲還是屠猪高。 'To ensure the enrichment of successive generations by Imperial favor, no method is so good as the practice of Wickedness; to render one's family famous, the loftiest plan is still that of butchering pigs' !

The difficulty of finding an answering line for the one propounded, is often due to the perceived necessity of matching not merely the tone and meaning of a character, but even its shape. Thus a teacher gave out the following: 冰涼酒, 一點兩點三點, 'Ice cold wine—one drop—two drops—three drops.' In this example, the embarrassment arises from the composition of the first three characters. Ice (冰) has one dot or point (一點), cool (涼) has two (兩點), while wine (酒) has three (三點). A preternaturally clever boy of nine years solved the problem, however, as follows: 丁香花, 百頭千頭萬頭, 'Lilac flowers—an hundred heads—a thousand heads—a myriad heads;' where the "head" of the *ting* (丁) character corresponds to that of *pai* (百), one hundred, the 'head' of *hsiang* (香) is like that of *ch'ien* (千), a thousand, and the summit of the flower character (花) is identical with that of *wan* (萬), ten thousand.

The following is another example of the talent of the Clever Boy, who so often comes to the front in Chinese legends and literature.

A certain official of the rank of *Chih fu* (知府) was passing through the streets of a city, seated in his chair, when half a dozen boys, just let loose from the dismal monotony and the literally 'howling wilderness' of a Chinese school, were making the air ring with their shouts of merry laughter. However in accordance with Common Sense or the dictates of Hygiene such actions may be, they are horribly incompatible with the Chinese code of behavior for budding Confucianists,—“a code for mummies”—which leaves no room for Animal Spirits or for anything but the Proprieties. Among the rest, the Official observed a lad of bright look and with a handsome face, whose hilariousness was more marked than that of the others, and who was evidently a leader. Halting his chair, the *Chih fu* had the obnoxious boy summoned before him, and sternly inquired: "Is this the kind of demeanor which you are



taught in your school? To atone for your gross impropriety of action, I shall on behalf of your teacher, beat you ten blows on your hand, unless you make me a couplet on the spot." "Oh," replied the lad, "that is easily done," whereupon he uttered the following sentences, the first five characters of which are a quotation from the Confucian Analects. (*Tai Shou* 太守, it should be remarked, is a synonym for *Chih fu*, who also has a sort of nickname, to wit, "Two thousand piculs of grain"—in allusion to an ancient fixed revenue attached to his office). Quoth the boy: 童子六七八人屬汝甚劣, 太守二千石惟公最. "Among six or seven boys, you are the very worst; among Prefects, with their 200,000 pounds of grain, Your Excellency is the most——." "The most *what*?" said the Prefect. "Why do you not finish?" "Because," replied the lad, "there are two endings—one if you give me a present for my couplet (賞) and one if you do not." "Well," said the *Chih fu*, "suppose I do give you something—what is the word?" "In that case," said the boy, "it is *lien*" (廉 *incorruptible*, and otherwise officially virtuous). "And suppose I do not give you anything?" "Why, then," said the youth, "it would have to be *t'an*" (貪 *avaricious, sordid*). The Prefect smiled, gave the boy two thousand cash, and went on his way. It is nearly superfluous to remark that this child was only seven years of age!

A perfectly successful response to a difficult line of a couplet is not simply one which, like the answer to a problem in Euclid, merely satisfies the conditions. For the very highest effect, there is required an indefinable loftiness of style, which resembles expression in music, and without which even faultless execution leaves an impression of a certain deficit.

The difference between these methods is illustrated in the two following examples. In the first, there was proposed a most unpromising combination: 文學堂、武學堂、文武學堂學文武. 'The civil academy and the military academy; the civil and the military academies are the places in which are learned things civil and military.' To this a youth of brilliant natural gifts responded: 東當舖、西當舖、東西當舖當東西. 'The eastern pawn shops and the western pawn-shops; the eastern and the western pawn-shops—this is where they pawn things.' Without depreciating the skill with which the ingenious pupil accomplished his task, the discriminating reader recognizes the fact that pawn-shops afford



no suitable antithesis to institutions in which the great art of governing a nation is taught, and he is therefore not in the least surprised to learn that the author of the reply—despite his intellectual capacity—died a beggar!

On the other hand, witness the following: 風聲雨聲讀書聲, 聲聲入耳, 'The sound of the wind, the sound of the rain, the sound of the study of books—all these sounds enter the ear.' The usual seven-years-old lad emerges, with the following ambitious response: 家事國事天下事, 事事關心, 'The affairs of a family, the affairs of the state, the affairs of all under heaven—all these affairs concern my mind.' In view of the comprehensive scope of the boy's reply, every one must perceive that he was foreordained to be a Senior Wrangler, or first scholar of the Empire (狀元), which he subsequently became.

Chinese history abounds in instances in which Emperors have proposed lines of couplets, both as a mere recreation and as a test of literary ability and character. Of the latter, *Hung Wu* (洪武) is an example—the famous founder of the Ming Dynasty. His elder son having died, the heir apparent was the grandson of the Emperor. The younger son of *Hung Wu* was, however, spirited and ambitious. The Emperor put forth the following line, to which both his son and his grandson were to furnish a reply. His Majesty's life had been a tempestuous one, from his lonely orphanhood to his successful leadership of a vast horde of insurgents, who rose against the crumbling dynasty of the Mongol usurpers. It was the life of a man on a spirited steed at full speed. These therefore were his words: 風吹馬尾千條線, 'When the wind blows the horse's tail, it shows a thousand separate threads.' To this sentiment his grandson responded: 雨打羊毛一片毡, 'The rain beats the sheep's wool into a mass of felt.' His uncle replied in a different key: 日照龍鱗萬點金, 'When the sun irradiates the scales of the Dragon, it resembles a myriad points of gold.' Nearly every detail in the antithesis in these two answers is characteristic—the rain beating on the pelt of a poor sheep, contrasted with the sun lighting up the horny scales of a fierce Dragon! a single tangled mat of wet wool opposed to ten thousand luminous sparks of gold! From these data alone, the sagacious fortune-teller might calculate the fate of the two lads of whom the former succeeded his grandfather (taking the title of *Chien Wên* 建文), being driven

from the throne, however, at the end of four years, by his uncle (with his sealy Dragon), who seized the empire and took the famous title of *Yung Lo* (永樂).

The great Emperors of the present Dynasty have been distinguished for their couplets. The following, proposed by *Ch'ien Lung* (乾隆), is well known: 泰山石稀爛挺硬, 'The stones of Mount T'ai, although they seem as if cooked soft, are yet hard.' To which *Wang Hsi* (王熙) replied: 黃河水翻滾冰涼, 'The waters of the Yellow River appear to bubble and boil, but are ice-cold.'

The following is said to have been propounded by *Ch'ien Lung*, and consists in an apparently unmeaning repetition of the name of a certain bridge, called 'The Bridge of the Eight Directions,' 八方橋。八八方。八方橋上望八方。八方。八方。八八方。 'The eight-direction bridge; the eight, the eight directions; on the bridge of the eight directions, look toward the eight directions. Eight directions, eight directions; the eight, the eight directions!' This line was apparently given out when His Majesty was in his chariot, for his driver promptly replied as follows: 萬歲爺。萬萬歲。萬歲爺前呼萬歲。萬歲。萬歲。萬萬歲, 'The lord of ten thousand years; of ten thousand times ten thousand years; before the lord of ten thousand years proclaim ten thousand years. Ten thousand years, ten thousand years, ten thousand times ten thousand years!'

Upon another occasion the same Emperor is said to have been petitioned by a certain Minister for leave to retire from active employment, that he might go home and care for his aged parents (終養). His majesty gave him a line of a couplet, upon condition of his matching which, his request was to be granted. The following was the line: 十口心思。思鄉思土思父母, 'Ten mouths and one heart constitute reflection; reflecting upon one's village, reflecting upon one's lands, reflecting upon one's father and mother.' The Minister, however, could dissect characters even better than the Emperor, and this was his reply: 寸身言謝。謝天謝地謝君王, "An inch, body, and words, compose the expression of gratitude; gratitude to Heaven, gratitude to Earth, gratitude to the Prince."

For the following additional example of a couplet, the first line of which was proposed to a Senior Wrangler from Soochow named



P'an Shih en (潘世恩) and matched by him, we are indebted to the late Rev. Y. K. Yen (in a review published in the *Chinese Recorder*).

孔門立表、曾子、子思、孟子、  
周代開基、太王、王季、文王、

'In the Confucian school those who framed rules of conduct are Tseng Tzu, Tsu Ssu, and Mencius.' 'Of the Chou Dynasty those who laid the foundations were Tai Wang, Wang Chi, and Wen Wang.' The beauty is to be appreciated only in the original, where the different meanings of tzu 子 and wang 王 are distinct. The skill lies in the fact that no other line can match the one proposed. It is said that the Emperor then and there made a profound bow to P'an, a condescension never vouchsafed to any subject. His Majesty also asked him as to the best article of food, and the answer was "chi," 飢 (雞).

There are some mathematical quantities so obstinately incommensurable as to be incapable of expression in rational numbers, and which are called imperfect quantities—surds. There appear to be certain combinations of characters, the antithesis of which are linguistic surds, impossible of expression. The catholicity of sentiment of the Emperor K'ang Hsi is well known. What he really believed, it would be hard to determine. The same may be said of his grandson Ch'ien Lung. Gibbon has remarked of the peculiar condition to which the Roman Empire was reduced in the early centuries of the Christian era, that to the common people all religions were equally true, to the philosopher all were equally false, and to the magistrate all were equally useful. Ch'ien Lung was *par excellence* a Magistrate. All religions were useful which in any way assisted in keeping in order the teeming millions of a populous empire. And as to which is true? 'For what, after all,' His Majesty probably said to himself, 'is truth?' And when he had asked the question, he proposed a line of a couplet to illustrate his views on 'Comparative Religions.' The following are the characters: 想忠恕, 念慈悲. 思感應, 三教同心. 'When I meditate upon Sincerity and Reciprocity; when I reflect upon Mercy and Pity; when I consider appropriate Recompense—then I perceive that the three doctrines are at heart one.' Chung (忠) and Shu (恕) are taken to represent the teachings of Confucius in reference to the passage: 'If one maintains his integrity and practices the reciprocal duties



he is not far from the path' (忠恕達道不遠), *Tz'u* (慈) *Pei* (悲) allude to the Buddhist representations of Buddha and *P'u Sa*, while *Kan Ying* (感應) indicates the Taoist 'Book of Rewards and Punishments.' It will be perceived that here are nine successive characters, all with the heart radical at the bottom. Although this line was proposed more than a hundred years ago, no one has yet matched it.

One other characteristic of certain Chinese couplets, deserves a moment's notice, and it is one to which a feeble and imperfect analogue may be found in English. Those who amuse their leisure by contriving new forms of verbal gymnastics, inform us that a sentence of thirty-five words may be constructed in which the word "that" can be grammatically inserted eighteen times; or, what is more to the present purpose, that the same word (for no other appears to be endued with the same tautological capacities) may be doubled, trebled, and quadrupled—nay, repeated until it forms a seven-fold cord, and all without violence to grammar or sense. In proof, we are treated to doggerel like the following:—

"I'll prove the word that I've made my theme  
Is that *that* may be doubled without blame;  
And that that *that*, thus trebled, I may use,  
And that that *that*, that critics may abuse  
May be correct. Further, the dons to bother—  
Five thats may closely follow one another;  
For, be it known, that we may safely write  
Or say, that that *that*, that that man writ, was right;  
Nay, e'en that that *that*, that *that* that followed,  
Through six repeats the grammar's rule has hallowed;  
And that that *that* (that *that* that *that* began)  
Repeated seven times is right! Deny 't who can!"

Whether any one will 'deny it' we do not know, but that every one must congratulate himself that there is only one word in English like *that*, we can have no hesitation in affirming.

Contrast this awkward and precarious 'pagoda of eggs' with the crisp tautology of a well 'woven' Chinese couplet, for example the following: 傳傳傳新傳傳傳傳詞調調調古調調調調歌. At first sight, this appears to be a mere verbal chaos. The explanation is, however, perfectly simple. Each of the repeated characters is to be read alternately in different tones, with different meanings—*ch'uan* 傳 to narrate, and *chuan* 傳 a story; *t'iao* 調 to

select, and *tiao* 調 a tune. With this understanding, the meaning is obvious: 'When you are narrating chronicles, narrate modern chronicles; and when you narrate chronicles, do it in a poetical form;' 'When you pick out a tune, pick out an ancient tune; and when you pick out a tune, pick out a song.'

This couplet is in common use among play actors, but is probably quoted rather for the antithesis than for its inherent value.

The following, also in use among play-actors, is of a somewhat different character: 臺上笑, 臺下笑, 臺上臺下笑引笑. 粧今人, 粧古人, 粧今粧古人粧人. 'There is laughter on the stage, laughter below the stage, on the stage and under the stage—laughter begets laughter; the play actors dress as modern men, they dress as ancient men, dress that is modern and dress that is ancient—men dress as men.'

A correspondent of the *Chinese Recorder* in one of its early numbers (February, 1871), writes to inform its readers that he had come upon some couplets of this kind, which he cautiously (but safely) describes as "a certain method of grouping characters," and invites "some person kindly to furnish a full explanation of the meaning and character of this style of composition." As no attention whatever was apparently paid to this request, and as the *Recorder* itself, about fifteen months afterwards, fell into a condition of (almost) fatal coma, and was long lost to sight, the couplets will bear reproducing. Here is the first: 書生書生問先生先生先生, 馬快馬快追步快步快. Of this couplet, the following translation is (doubtfully) suggested by the correspondent who furnishes it: "The pupil of an incompetent teacher, engages in the vain pursuit of knowledge; the swift foot-soldier is swiftly pursued by the horseman." This rendering glides easily over the difficulty of so many repetitions by ignoring them, and is moreover not readily deducible from the characters as they stand. The general meaning of the lines is quite clear, and may be given as follows: 'The pupil (書生) who is unfamiliar with books (書生), asks his teacher 問先生 (saying) Teacher (先生) were you also formerly (先) green (生) (as I am now)? The thief catcher (馬快) swiftly (馬快) pursues the man who serves the warrants (步快); but the warrant-server (步快) is swift of foot (步快).'

The other couplet is as follows: 朝朝朝朝朝朝夕, 月月月月月圓. This, we are informed, is to be "translated on the

same principle." As no principle, however, has been enounced, or even hinted at, we are not much the wiser for the suggestion. Notwithstanding the formidable reduplication, the meaning is obvious. 'Every day (朝朝) has its dawn (朝), and every day (朝朝) has its dawn and eve (朝夕). Every month (月月) has its moon (月), and the moon of every month is round' (月月月圓).<sup>\*</sup> The three following are very similar:—

馬快騎馬。馬快勝過馬快。  
象奴乘象。象奴不似象奴。

'The thief-taker rides a horse, and the thief-taker is swifter than the horse; the elephant tender mounts the elephant, and the elephant-tender is not like a slave of the elephant.'

朝潮朝潮朝朝潮。  
宵消宵消宵宵消。

'In the morning there is a tide; in the morning there is a tide, there is a tide every morning!'

'At night it lessens, at night it lessens, every night it lessens.'

In the next instance two characters only—to be read in different tones and with different meaning—suffice for a Couplet:

朝朝朝朝朝朝朝。  
長長長長長長長。

'In the morning there is a Court, in the morning there is a Court, every morning there is a Court; constantly growing, constantly growing, always and forever growing.'

<sup>\*</sup> In the Chinese line of seven syllables, the Caesural pause regularly occurs after the fourth syllable. To this rule there are, however, exceptions, of which this seems to be one. The attempt has been made to translate these lines, following the ordinary division of the Septameter as follows: "Every dawn there dawns a dawn, and every dawn has its eve. Every moon there moons a moon (!!) and every moon is round."





## CHAPTER IV.

### *Poetical Quotations.*

The relation between Chinese Proverbs and Chinese Poetry (not classical) resembles that between Proverbs and Antithetical Couplets. All those qualities of the Antithetical Couplet which adapt it for quotation are frequently found in poetry, with the additional attraction of the rhyme. Proverbs and other Common Sayings are often caught up by the composer of a poem and woven into his verses, while on the other hand, a well turned poetical expression sometimes gives it a permanent currency, as is the case with so many of the lines of Pope. Whether the Proverb has been made poetical by its setting, or the poetical expression has become proverbial by constant quotation, it may be sometimes difficult to determine. In cases of the latter class, the remote origin of a poetical 'Common Saying' has often been lost sight of by every one but Scholars.

An examination in detail of the Rules governing the construction of the different varieties of Chinese poetry (vaguely classified as *Shih*, *Tx'u*, *Ko*, and *Fu* 詩詞歌賦), is fortunately quite unessential to our purpose, since the subject is somewhat complicated, and as full of intricate details and thorny Exceptions as a Latin Accidence. In the Literary Examinations, the *Shih* and *Fu* are the only recognized forms of Poetry. The *Tx'u* and *Ko* are more spontaneous, or even lawless, sometimes descending by rapid stages into a species of rhythmic prose, or even into mere doggerel. While the *Shih* has either five or seven characters to the line, other kinds of verse often enjoy unfettered license.

The structure of Chinese poetry is so condensed, that it is frequently next to impossible to render it into English verse which shall not be intolerably rugged, unless the thought is considerably expanded.

To attempt to transfer a four-line Chinese verse into a stanza in English of a similar length is often to undertake the impossible, and the result is by no means worth the trouble. In the appended

poems the reproduction in English is generally a paraphrase rather than a translation, of which, however, there are some instances (as in the Poem on the Signs of Old Age). In most of the others, there is what a friendly critic calls "great loss of compactness" as compared with the elusive allusions of many of the Chinese lines.

The examples have been selected, as in the case of Anti-*thetical Couplets*, not only to show how Proverbial Sayings are often found in poetical forms, but also to make it incidentally evident how smooth verses may easily become current linguistic coin. A little book called the Poems of *Shen T'ung* (神童) or the Divine Child—also known as *Hsieh hsueh shih* (解學士)—is in general circulation, and contains many lines which have become proverbial. The verses are reputed to have been composed by this supernatural Infant before the age of ten years. The following is a common citation from *Shen T'ung*:—

'He was only a Common Farmer, when that morning brought its light,  
And yet as the Emperor's Minister high, he trod his halls at night;  
For Generals and Statesmen, too, are seldom raised from seed,  
That every youth should struggle hard—this is the vital need.'

朝爲田舍郎。暮登天子堂。  
將相本無種。男兒當自強。

This *Shen T'ung* was a native of the province of Kiangsi, and is said to have lived in the Ming Dynasty. After he became a Cabinet Minister (學士) this title was appended to his name as that of Divine Child had been. It is related of him that when a mere lad, on the occasion of accompanying his father to the District City, he saw a Buddhist priest wearing a wooden platform (*Chia* 枷) about his neck, a punishment for adultery. The sight of this priest's shaven head emerging from the hole in the cangue, immediately inspired *Shen T'ung* with a verse, in his usual manner, the first line of which contains a play upon the two (*Chia* 家, 枷) characters.

出家又扛枷。剃髮又犯法。  
四塊無情板。夾着大西瓜。

#### FREE TRANSLATION.

This man became a Buddhist priest, and then became a felon.  
He learned the laws that Buddha spoke;  
Through lust his country's laws he broke.  
(His priestly garb was but a cloak

For crimes like those of other folk)  
So now he wears a wooden yoke  
Its ruthless timbers made of oak (I)  
Support his clumsy water-melon.

Of this constant reduction of the Muses to the condition of servant maids, his father at last grew tired, and peremptorily forbade his son to speak at all, unless he could confine himself to prose. At the same time he ordered him to take a broom and sweep the space before the house, to remove gently the basket coops containing young chickens, and to do it all without any rhymes. *Shen Tung* seized the broom, and fell vigorously to work, but the force of habit was too strong for him, and he unconsciously and mechanically chanted the following lines:—

淨掃堂前地，輕拿罩內雞。  
Run out in front and sweep the yard,  
Set not the little chickens down hard.

At this point he chanced to look up, and perceived his father gazing sternly toward him, whereupon he added *sotto voce*, two lines more:—

分明是說話。又當我吟詩。  
(Aside) 'When simply talking—even then  
He thinks I'm humming verse again!'

After he had become a Councillor of State, the story is that as he was walking in the Imperial gardens with the Emperor, a strange bird lit upon a tree, and shook his large fan-like tail in a very singular manner. The Emperor inquired of the Minister what bird this was, to which the latter, who had really never seen one before and had no knowledge whatever on the subject, replied in the readiest manner that it was called the 'Seven Shake Chicken' (七雞搖), because of the number of movements of the tail when it flew. The Emperor then drew his bow, and shot at the bird, which shook itself nine times, and departed. To the not unnatural inquiry of the Emperor how this performance was to be reconciled with the statement which his Minister had just made, *Hsieh Hsieh Shih* promptly responded with an impromptu verse, as follows:—

七雞搖，七雞搖。飛騰上九霄。  
今日朝天子。再加搖兩搖。  
The Shaker Bird his shakes are seven  
As he wings his way to the topmost heaven;



The Son of Heaven he sees to-day,  
So adds two shakes and flies away.

---

FAMILY POEM.

A "Priceless Medicine" for preserving peace in the household.

'When sisters-in-law are joined in heart  
No family comes to ill;  
When Sons all act a filial part  
It works like a Harmony-pill.'

萬金難買之藥。  
妯娌蜜和家不散。子孝雙親順氣丸。

---

POEM.

Designed to demonstrate that the more one has, the worse off he is.

'Oh, why should men long with a longing so sore  
For ill gotten riches that Heaven cannot bless?  
When the Owner is dead, riches serve him no more—  
It is better to live and to covet wealth less.'

爲人何必苦貪財。貪得財來天降災。  
即是有錢人不在。不如人在少貪財。

---

POEM.

Intended to show that a Title-Deed and a Lease come to the same thing in the end.

'The mountains green, the lovely vales, a prospect fair to see—  
Those lands which now the fathers own, their children's soon will be;  
Yet let them not with sudden wealth be too elate in mind,  
They too have their posterity which follows close behind.'

一派青山景色幽。前人田地後人收。  
後人收得休歡喜。還有收人在後頭。

---

POEM.

Showing how Prevention is better than Cure.

'The man who rules his appetite  
Will always keep his spirits light,  
But many anxious thoughts combine  
The vital force to undermine;  
Refrain from wine and save your health,  
Nor yield to wrath that wastes your wealth.'

慾寡精神爽。思多氣血衰。  
少盃不亂性。除氣免傷財。

## DIETETIC POEM.

Explaining some physiological facts, and imparting some valuable advice which costs the Reader nothing.

'Long not for dainties rich and rare,  
For dangers lie in ambush there;  
Along the surface of the tongue  
The nerves of taste are finely strung.  
Consider this important fact—  
No matter what the food you eat,  
Once past this gustatory tract  
Who can distinguish sour from sweet!'

滋味勿多貪。生靈害百般。  
乍過三寸舌。誰更辨甜酸。

POEM ON A NEW BRIDE. (*T'ang Dynasty.*)

Showing how a Young Woman should first learn to cook, and then wed a man who has an unmarried sister.

'Three days the newly married bride  
In strict seclusion ought to hide;  
With dainty hands then sallies forth  
To mix her trial pot of broth.  
In China, as is known to most,  
The husband's mother rules the roost,  
But to the new made bride alone  
This lady's tastes are all unknown.  
Lest, wrongly mixed, her soup she waste  
She makes her husband's sister taste.'

## 新 嫁 娘。

三日入廚下。洗手作羹湯。  
未諳姑食性。先遣小姑嘗。

The following Poem is by Ho Chih-chang (賀知章), a poet of the T'ang Dynasty, who was also a wine bibber.

The concluding line is a common proverb, but embodies a statement preposterously inexact. Whatever may have been true in the palmy days of the T'ang, that a purse contains money, is now anything but certain.

'He knew me not where I stopped one day  
At a Sylvan Spring beside the way;  
"Fear not to lose your wine," I cried,  
"A purse is sure to have cash inside,"'

主人不相識。偶坐爲林泉。  
莫謾愁沽酒。囊中自有錢。

---

IMPROMPTU POEM.

Showing how a thimbleful of water taken from the middle  
of a Pond, leaves no perceptible Hole.

ON RETURNING TO ONE'S NATIVE VILLAGE. *By Ho Chih-chang.*

"He left his village a wee little Mite,  
He came back old, with his temples white;  
His face was strange, but his brogue was true,  
Cried the laughing juveniles: "Whence came you!"

回鄉偶書。 賀知章。  
少小離家老大回。鄉音無改鬢毛衰。  
兒童相見不相識。笑問客從何處來。

---

POEM.

Showing the disadvantages of marrying a man who is liable to  
be sent away to a distance, of sleeping late in the morning, and of  
allowing slubbery to grow in the vicinity of one's bed-room.

THE EXASPERATIONS OF SPRING. *By Chin Ch'ang-hsü.*  
(T'ang Dynasty.)

'Drive off those Orioles from that tree  
Nor let them on its branches scream,  
To join my lord in far Liao Hsi  
I took my journey in my dream;  
These birds awaked me with their call—  
I failed to reach there after all!'

春怨。 金昌緒。  
打起黃鶯兒。莫教枝上啼。  
啼時驚妾夢。不得到遼西。

---

The reputed author of the following verse is *Chiang T'ai-kung*  
(姜太公 12th century B.C.), a character to be referred to hereafter.  
His wife insisted on a divorce, because of his extreme poverty, and  
in spite of his tears, she laughed as she left him. With a fine irony,



this lady has come to be regarded as the goddess of the eight varieties of Insects noxious to grain (八蜡神), especially grasshoppers. Her functions in this capacity are, however, somewhat ill-defined.

## POEM ON COMPARATIVE TOXICOLOGY.

Showing the extreme facility with which a Man may be bitten (or stung) when he is least on his guard, and showing also Who does it.

'The Serpent's mouth in the green bamboo,  
And the yellow Hornet's caudal dart,  
Little the injury these can do—  
More venomous far is a Woman's Heart!'

青竹蛇兒口。黃蜂尾上針。  
兩般猶自可。最毒婦人心。\*

## SCHOLAR'S POEM.

Showing the influence upon the Chinese intellect of the movement of the Earth in the Ecliptic, and furnishing a fresh argument for the Unity of the Human Race.

\* Attention has been already called, under the head of Variations in Proverbs, to the very different forms in which the caustic saying with which this Ode concludes, is met: 最妒[毒]不過婦人心. From a sentence in the commentary on the *Liao Chia* (聊齋), a famous composition of *P'u Liu* (蒲留), [See Mayer's Manual No. 567], it appears that these characteristics of the feminine nature are regarded as not only analogous in quality, but as ultimately identical in origin, and as differing only in degree. The following is the quotation referred to: 婦人無德有三。曰。獨、妒、毒、未有獨而不妒者。未有妒而不毒者., i.e., 'The absence of Virtue in Woman is of three grades, known as *Tu* (獨) *Tu* (妒) and *Tu* (毒).' [The first of these denotes that state of mind in which the attention is concentrated upon Self—Egoism—and is expressed in the phrase: 'I rather than You,' or in the ancient baronial motto: 'Thou shalt want ere I shall want.' This feeling inevitably results in Envy (妒)—grief at the excellent qualities or gifts of another, and this in turn ends in Malignity (毒), a fixed purpose of doing mischief to the object of the feeling.] The Reader will observe the significant predicate with which the commentator concludes: 'No Woman was ever egoistic, without becoming envious, nor envious without becoming malignant.' Hence the expression, 'Women can share one's adversity [which calls out the better side of their nature], but cannot share prosperity' [which results in the moral descent explained above] 婦人可以共患難,不可以共富貴. So also: 'The short-sightedness of Woman' 女人短見., i.e., Women can appreciate what is immediately before their eyes—(and they can appreciate nothing else). Yet more opprobrious is the current saying: 'Like a Woman's Benevolence, and a Mean Man's Courage' 婦人之仁,匹夫之勇., i.e., a very inferior article. In a still stronger sense, the expression is also employed to denote an excellence merely pretended, as when one reads the Buddhist Sacred Books in public, and then turns to reviling his neighbors. Such incidental testimony to certain Chinese views on the moral nature of Woman is worth more than a volume of essays on the subject, for the reason that the positions are assumed as self-evident, and are not reached by argument.

'On our studies in the Spring-time, it is hard to fix our mind,  
While in incandescent Summer days to sleep we feel inclined;  
Then the Autumn soon reminds us that the Solstice must be near,  
When we pack our books and scramble home to welcome in the Year.'

春天不是讀書天。夏日炎炎正好眠。  
到了秋來冬又至。收拾書箱過新年。

The following Verse is by *Li Po* (李白), the most famous of Chinese poets, who lived in the golden age of Chinese poetry—the T'ang Dynasty.

RESENTMENT.

'A comely woman rolls the screen,  
Deep frowns upon her brow are seen;  
We see her tears streaming early and late,  
Nor guess the object of her hate.'

怨情

美人捲珠簾。深坐嚬蛾眉。  
但見淚痕濕。不知心恨誰。

The following is by the same author; the subject is a favorite one with Chinese poets.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

'Before my couch the moonbeams bright  
Are like the hoar-frost pure and white;  
I raise my eyes, and see the moon,  
I drop them and I think of Home.'

夜思

牀前明月光。疑是地上霜。  
舉頭望明月。低頭思故鄉。

That the present age, whatever it may be, is degenerate as compared with every preceding one, has been a leading tenet in all times and in all lands, and China is no exception. Confucius declared that 'People now-a-days are stupid and deceitful' (今之人愚而詐). Similar observations are proverbial in manifold forms. 'The Present is not to be compared with the Past' (今非昔比). 'Each generation is inferior to the last' (一輩不如一輩). "In Benevolence and Justice the Present is not equal to the Past, but as

regards ruin of conscience, the Past cannot compete with the Present' (論仁義今不如古。喪良心古不如今。). To a similar purport is the following

## POEM.

Showing that the alleged Progress of the Human Race is a fraud, and that all which is strictly essential to Man is his Stomach.

'Books, Drawing, Chess, and Music, with Odes, and Wine, and Flowers,  
These pleasures seven were once the joy of rich men's leisure hours ;  
But now the tune of life is pitched on a totally different key,  
'T is only Fuel, and Rice and Oil, Salt, Vinegar, Sauces and Tea!'

書畫琴棋詩酒花。當年富足不離他。  
而今七字都更變。柴米油鹽醬醋茶。

## POEM ON THE SIGNS OF OLD AGE.

Recapitulating a few facts which the observant Reader may have discovered for himself, and appending one fact of which he is probably ignorant.

'When Men grow old their loins are bent, and their heads are drooping too ;  
When Trees grow old, the branches dry and the leaves are scant and few ;  
When a Beast grows old, his hairless tail between his legs he jams ;  
When Birds grow old, they enter the water and there they are changed to Clams !'

人老毛腰把頭低。樹老焦梢葉兒稀。  
獸老脫毛夾着尾。禽老入水變蛤蜊。

## POEM.

Showing the surprising effects of a difference in the Angle of Vision, imparting the secret of True Happiness as discovered by Little Jack Horner, and concluding by anticipating Robert Burns.

'The Bald man thinks, though his pate is bare  
Its luster bright is better than hair ;  
The Hedgehog chooses filth to eat,  
And yet declares his diet is sweet ;  
The Sea-crab travels his zigzag gait,  
And still avers his course is straight ;  
Oh would some Power the giftie gie us  
To see ourselves as others see us !'



禿子無毛他說光。蝟蝟吃糞他說香。  
螃蟹橫行他說正。只有旁人話短長。

## POEM.

Showing the embarrassments to which the truly Great Man  
may be subjected—especially at night.

'The Heavens are my embroidered spread,  
The Earth a blanket for my bed,  
And all the stars that fill the sky  
Are my companions where I lie.  
I dare not stretch my limbs at length,  
When vexed by midnight's restless dreams,  
For fear the Mountains by my strength  
I overturn—and spill the Streams!'

天作錦被地作毯。滿天星斗伴吾眠。  
夜半不敢長舒腿。恐怕蹬倒山和川。

## POEM.

Showing how the Soft gets the better of the Hard (柔能克剛)

## FORBEARANCE.

'The Tongue is an instrument yielding and pliant  
Yet safe in the mouth it forever remains,  
While the Teeth are inflexible, hard, and defiant,  
And frequently broken to pay for their pains.  
As we think of it then, this character *Jén*  
Is a joy and delight to all sensible men.'

## 忍

舌柔常在口。齒折只爲剛。  
思量這忍字。好個快活方。

## POEM.

Showing how the less is said the better (多言不如少言。少  
言不如無言)。

'When wicked men the virtuous man revile  
The virtuous man will hold his peace the while;  
If he in turn reviles, 't is a confession  
That he and they alike have no discretion.'

惡人罵善人。善人總不對。  
善人若還罵。彼此無智慧。

POEM.

Showing the necessity of Reciprocity, elucidating the true functions of Friendship, and explaining one of the fundamental principles of the Chinese Empire.

'When heaven sends rain earth turns to mire, each mortal slips and falls,  
In struggling to regain his feet each mortal creeps and crawls;  
Dost thou expect thy friends and kin to lend a hand to thee,  
Repay each sip of wine with wine, each cup of tea with tea.'

天上下雨地下滑。各人栽倒各人爬。  
要得親友拉一把。酒換酒來茶換茶。

POEM.

Showing the *Facilis descensus Averni*.

'Whenever the Blind instruct the blind,  
The more is taught the less they think;  
The Teacher slides down Hades' brink,  
The obsequious Pupils close behind.'

懵懂勸懵懂。越勸越不醒。  
師傅下地獄。徒弟後邊跟。

POEM.

Showing the advantages arising from getting back into one's Sphere.

'A golden Bell lay in the mire,  
Men took it for a useless stone;  
At length 't was hung,  
When forth it rung  
In such pure tone  
Its fame to all the world was known.'

一口金鐘在淤泥。人人拿着當頑石。  
有朝一日懸掛起。響亮一聲天下知。

POEM.

Showing the folly of unbounded Ambition.

'Ye mortals on this dusty earth, strive not to be the first,  
For mingled with the best of men, are others who are worst;

I, too, once thought my foot could tread as yet untrodden ground,  
And wot not that beyond the heavens, yet other heavens are found.'

人生紅塵休爭先。好漢後有好漢奸。  
常想我到無人到。那知天外還有天。

Every one is familiar with the perpetual observation of the Chinese, whenever any allusion is made to the "Three Doctrines" of China, that after all they come to the same thing (三教歸一). The convenient ambiguity of Chinese characters, admits, however, a somewhat more rational explanation of this formula, than that each of the sects is merely an allotropic aspect of the same fundamental thought. Every one of the three doctrines is based upon a *Unity*. In the Taoist formula, this is expressed in the words: 抱元守一 'Embracing the original principle (元氣) and maintaining the unity,' where the last character refers to the chapter in the Book of Changes, beginning: 'Heaven is one, Earth is two,' etc. (天一地二). Among the Buddhists it is a common saying: 'The ten thousand precepts revert to one' (萬法歸一). In the Confucian Analects, Confucius informs his disciples that his doctrine is that of an all-pervading Unity (吾道一以貫之). Since each of these great systems professes to be based upon a single character, and that the simplest in the language, how vast and far reaching must this symbol be! That it is so is a current formula among many of the countless Sects (門頭教口), as in the following

POEM ON A STRAIGHT LINE (— I).

Showing how, though it may perhaps be the shortest distance between two points, it is capable of being made as comprehensive as if it were a Polyhedron.

'O wide is the scope of the character *I*,  
Deep and profound is its mystery;  
Who dare attempt to define and explain it?  
All the four Continents cannot contain it;  
Rare is the man and felicitous he  
Who fathoms the depths of the character *I*,  
Seated on Ling Shan's lofty peak  
In the host of Immortals he dares to speak.'

一字大。一字大。四大部洲掛不下。  
有人得了一字傳。靈山會上能說話。



## LONGINGS FOR THE UNATTAINABLE.

Showing the importance of getting on the right side of a River in the first place, and the hopelessness of trying to get around it when it appears that one is on the wrong side.

'Across the river an ingot of gold,  
The river is deep, its waters wide;  
That prize your hands will never hold  
Because you are on the opposite side!'

隔河一錠金。河寬水又深。  
空急不到手。枉費那場心。

## POEM.

Showing that a Balloon with a large Hole in the side, cannot maintain the same position in the Air which it occupied before it sprung aleak.

'Your horses are white, their trappings bright, with tassels fresh and new,  
Each guest pretends to be one of your friends, as he comes with high ado.  
Death spirits away your horses gay; your riches fade from view;  
When gold has sped, your friends have fled—a Nobody now are you!'

白馬紅纓彩色新。不是親者強來親。  
有朝馬死黃金盡。親戚如同陌路人。

## THE "CRY OF THE CHILDREN."

Showing how Human Nature—especially that of Infants—rises superior to the trammels of Civilization, and (incidentally) exploding the statement of the Trimetrical Classic that at his origin everyone is perfectly good.

'Ye gods in the Heavens! Ye powers on the Earth!  
My Baby began from the hour of his birth,  
With horrible screams to rend the night.  
Oh! passing Stranger, these my rhymes  
Read, I beg of you, through three times,  
And then he will sleep till broad day light!'

天皇皇地皇皇。我家有个夜哭郎。  
過往君子念三遍。一覺睡到大天亮。

## POEM.

Showing how, though some Persons may be the worst in the world, there are Others just as bad, if not worse.

'Unceasing Heavens! Laborious Earth!  
 Pray what is one's existence worth  
 Whose Daughter learned as soon as born  
 To cry all night till early morn?  
 Kind hearted mortal passing by,  
 Thrice on this stanza fix thine eye,  
 Thus shall our infant fall asleep  
 In somnolency sound and deep.'

天碌碌 地碌碌。我家有女夜間哭。  
 過往君子念三遍。小女一夜睡的熟。

## POEM.

Exhorting to kind treatment of the Animate Creation in general [on the ground that since the Chinese have once acquired the habit of being transmigrated into Animals, one never knows which of them are to be one's future playmates, and can, moreover, never be certain that any particular Insect is not an allotropic form of one's Grand-mother!]

'Hook up the hanging door-screen,  
 Let the Swallow homeward hie,  
 And punch a hole in the lattice-work  
 For the sake of the Blue-bottle Fly.  
 For lack of suitable nourishment  
 Let not the Rats decamp,  
 And pity the injudicious Moth  
 With a gauze-net round your lamp'

鈎簾歸乳燕。穴牖放癡蠅。  
 爲鼠盤留飯。憐蛾紗籠燈。

## POEM.

Showing plainly, and yet beautifully, that there are two sides to some of the most obvious propositions, and explaining the vitality of Mormonism.

'For peace in one's domestic life  
 No treasure like an ugly wife,  
 While one most beautiful and fair  
 Will fill your days with grief and care.  
 But if abroad one shows her face  
 And mingles with the human race,  
 Why then, the truth must stand confessed  
 Your handsome face is still the best.'

醜是家中寶。俊人惹煩惱。  
要得人前站。還是俊的好。

POEM ON WORSHIPPING AT THE GRAVES IN THE SPRING.

Showing the advantage of taking things when you can get them.

By *Kao Chü Chien* of the Sung Dynasty.

[The last two lines have become proverbial.]

'Along the hills from north to south the cemeteries reach,  
Spring sweepings and libations come—confusion reigns in each;  
The burning paper's floating ash is changed to Butterflies,  
Where tears of blood have dyed the soil, the red Azaleas rise.  
At sunset fairy Foxes come and on the graves encamp,  
While home we turn with Boys and Girls to laugh around the lamp.  
If living men but have the wine, they *must* get drunk, I ween,  
For how can a single drop descend to regions Subterrene?'

清明節上墳。宋人高菊圃作。  
南北山頭多墓田。清明祭掃各紛然。  
紙灰飛作白蝴蝶。血淚染成紅杜鵑。  
日落狐狸眠塚上。夜歸兒女笑燈前。  
人生有酒須當醉。一滴何曾到九泉。

EXCELSIOR.

'The Sun is hid by the Mountains high,  
The Yellow River flows to the Sea;  
Would you inspect a thousand li,  
Climb one more flight and open your eye.'

白日依山盡。黃河入海流。  
欲窮千里目。更上一層樓。

The Emperor *Tang Tai Tsung* (*Chen Kuan* 貞觀) inquired of *Hsü Ching Tsung* (許敬宗), "What do the people say about Our faults?" *Ching Tsung* replied: "The spring rain is like ointment, all Nature rejoices in its enriching moisture; yet the travellers complain of the sticky mire. The harvest moon is like a mirror, the beautiful woman enjoys its delights; the thieves, however, are disgusted at its brilliancy. Since Heaven cannot give perfect satisfaction, how much less can Man!" *Ching Tsung* then continued,



dropping (like Mr. Wegg) into poetry, the last line of which has become proverbial.

'Men's idle words—'t is well to hear them not,  
Or if thou hear them, let them be forgot;  
For those that heed them, are thereby undone—  
The Prince and his Advisers—Sire and Son—  
And Wife and Husband breed a jealous heart,  
While closest Friends are often wrenched apart;  
Of many members in one body tall,  
The Tongue is least, and yet the worst of all,  
For in the Tongue there lurks a Dragon's den\*—  
No blood is seen—and yet it murders men!'

"Quite true," remarked the Emperor.

唐太宗問於許敬宗曰。人言朕的是非何如。敬宗對曰。春  
雨如膏。萬物喜其潤澤。行人嫌其泥濘。秋月如鏡。佳人喜  
其玩賞。盜賊妒其光輝。天尙不足。何況人乎。又曰。

是非不可聽。聽之不可信。  
君聽臣遭誅。父聽子遭殃。  
夫婦聽之離。朋友聽之絕。  
臣身六尺軀。隄防三寸舌。  
舌上有龍泉。殺人不見血。

太宗曰然也。

The following Poem of the T'ang Dynasty affords an excellent example of the way in which proverbs spring out of verse. The first two lines are essentially unquotable, while the two remaining ones are exactly adapted for every-day popular use, which in fact they have attained in the south of China. In the north, however, where mulberry cultivation and silk-worms are almost unknown, and where the crops are planted, instead of being transplanted, the last line is nearly always omitted.

#### RURAL ASPECTS OF THE FOURTH MOON.

'All verdure clad are hills and plains, the streams are brimming too,  
And promise of a misty rain comes from the loud cuckoo.  
The month of May has idlers few, abundant work it yields,  
For when the mulberry silk is through, 't is time to plant the fields.\*

綠遍山原白滿川。子規聲裏雨如烟。  
鄉村四月閑人少。纔了蠶桑又插田。

\* A poetical name for a Sword.

In the following verses any single line by itself, or any couplet, may be regarded as a Proverb.

ODE.

COMPRISING A VARIETY OF USEFUL INFORMATION.

'A stick that is crooked, though ironed out straight, is as crooked at last as before,  
And the Wolf that you train to behave like a Dog, will hardly stand guard at your door.  
The Raven, though powdered and washed till he's white, not for long will appear to be clean,  
And the pure Fairy Crane when you've dyed him in ink, will never look fit to be seen.  
The juice of the Wormwood, with honey though mixed, yet its taste it is hopeless to sweeten;  
So Melons and Fruits that are picked while they're green, will never be good to be eaten.  
To do as he should, whatsoever is good, is in none but the Princely Man's reach,  
But whom Heaven at his birth has endowed as a Fool, 't is a waste of instruction to teach.'

曲木熨直仍又彎。養狼當犬看家難。  
粉洗烏鴉白不久。墨染仙鶴不受觀。  
蜜餞黃連終須苦。強摘瓜果不甚甜。  
好事全憑君子作。天生愚魯教不賢。

The Poem, like the Antithetical Couplet, is a favorite means of conveying reproof. A School-teacher with whom the writer is acquainted, composed the following lines for the benefit of his brother. Opium-smokers, it is unnecessary to remark, are not reformed by reason—much less by rhymes.

'The Opium-smoker alas! alas! affairs have come to a horrible pass;  
Wife and children hungry and cold, and he cares nothing for young or old.  
No filial Posterity 'll burn for him the fragrant incense sweet;  
His friends exhort him again and again, till he hates the sound of their voice,  
Already he's only a bag of bones, with never an ounce of meat;  
Yet when he looks in the mirror clear, it makes his heart rejoice,  
So thin and light his body has grown, when he is dead 't will rise alone—  
Rise to heaven, or float in the air—and Pluto will gladly greet him there!'

鴉片鬼。寔可嘆。妻兒凍餓全不管。  
 爲死爲活只爲烟。絕後代。斷香烟。  
 朋友規勸嫌煩厭。瘦弱枯乾筋骨連。  
 冤錢照。自解寬。死後身輕好上天。閻君見我甚喜歡。

In a hamlet in the province of Shantung, a few persons had been baptized, in connection with a Protestant mission. The village contained two small temples, one to *Kuan Ti* (關帝), the God of War, and the other to All-the-gods (總神). At the New Years' time, one of the villagers copied a familiar verse, in which by an easy adaptation of the original significance the old religions were allegorically represented as a Pine Tree on the Mountain, while the new faith appears as a conceited little Flower, ridiculing the old Tree as inferior to itself. But the sharp Frost (by which the righteous anger of *Kuan Ti* and All-the-gods was figured) demolishes the Flower, leaving the Tree unscathed. The four lines of this verse were most absurdly separated from each other, the first two being pasted on the posts of the temple at the eastern end of the village, and the remaining two upon the pillars of the temple at the western end.

The leader of the new sect, perceiving his faith thus assailed, rushed to the rescue with a counter set of verses, which he pasted on the temple wall, where they were allowed to remain until blown away by the wind. Each of these poetical disputants was a poor and hard-working farmer, neither of them could lay claim to any education, and neither of them could write without inditing false characters. The verses, themselves, which are given below, are of no other interest than as exemplifying in a striking manner, the irresistible propensity of the Chinese (as already mentioned) to reach an opponent by indirection. The ingenuity of the attack lay entirely in its obliquity, converting an Ancient Verse by implication into an Ode against Christianity.

'High on the mountain a dark green Fir—a Floweret on the plain;  
 But the Flower is proud and laughs aloud at the Fir with high disdain,  
 Yet there comes a day when the biting Frost descends on hill and plain,  
 The Fir trees stand serene and grand, but the Flower is sought,  
 in vain!'

山上青松山下花。花笑青松不如他。  
 有朝一日嚴霜降。但見青松不見花。



## REPLY.

BY A ZEALOUS (BUT IMPERFECTLY EDUCATED) CHRISTIAN.

'The Fir was made to shoot up tall, and the Flower to bloom below;  
Each has its cause, and its hidden laws, as you, at least, should know.  
The dark green Fir—the blooming Flower—now what by these are  
meant?

Each has its birth from the mother earth—but what do they represent?  
And you that sit at the Sage's feet, and would his pupil be,  
"He that is good, acts as he should," what mean such words to thee?  
The wise man's awe of Heaven's decree, is an awe you sadly lack,  
As forth you pour at the temple door your incoherent clack.'

松是松來花是花。較比二物理不達。  
一般都是根在土。誰是青松誰是花。  
既在孔門爲弟子。君子務本說的麼。  
三畏天命你不懼。人裏面前胡扯拉。

Chinese history abounds in Poems—as we have seen to be the case with Antithetical Couplets—which have been made on special occasions, real or imaginary. In the horrible wars carried on by the Northern Tartars who founded the Yüan Dynasty, vast regions of country were involved. Among other places the city of *Chi An* (吉安) in the province of Kiang Hsi was stormed and captured, and its inhabitants subjected to spoliation and insult. A beautiful woman, whose surname was *Chao*, was pursued by the savage Tartars, and clasping to her bosom her infant boy, fled to the refuge of a temple. The soldiers soon overtook her, when she reviled them, at which they were so exasperated that they plunged their swords into the child. The mother immediately dipped her finger in his blood, and wrote the following verse, after which she dashed her head against the wall, and died. The blood stains, we are assured, have outlasted six hundred years, and are still visible. The verse has been cut in the stone upon which it was written.

## POEM.

A MOTHER'S SORROW.

'If I had died before my son his heart had swelled with grief,  
And since I see him snatched away my woe finds no relief.  
Ah! happy fate which suffers us to perish hand in hand,  
So with a smiling countenance we enter the Shady Land.'

我死兒悲傷。兒亡我斷腸。  
幸兒同娘死。含笑入泉鄉。

It is common in China to punish thieves by tattooing upon the temple the character *ch'ieh* (竊), 'Thief,' which is done by pricking its outline with needles, and afterwards rubbing in coloring matter. There is a story of a certain culprit thus treated, whose brand when inspected by the Magistrate, was found to be only the abbreviated form of the character (竊) whereupon he required that the operation should be performed all over again in the regular way. These occurrences having rendered the prosecution of his calling somewhat inconvenient, the thief took to begging, and as he begged chanted the following

POEM OF A TATTOOED BEGGAR.

Showing the disadvantages of bearing a Bad Character, how it may be painful to acquire, and hard to get rid of.

'In my hand I hold a mirror, as I scrutinize my face  
I see the fresh blood dripping from the wound in the same old place.  
Had I dreamed of this disaster when first I learned to steal,  
Of reduplicated tortures which *he* would make me feel,  
As I practised my profession I'd have taken greater heed  
To avoid a District Magistrate who knows enough to read.'

手把菱花仔細看。淋漓鮮血舊痕斑。  
早知今日重爲苦。學盜先防識字官。

The forms of versification afford a convenient vehicle in Chinese, as in other languages, for little tales with a moral. Popular Proverbs are easily introduced to point the moral and adorn the tale.

QUADRILATERAL POEM.

Showing the folly of Avarice and the universally subjective tendencies of the Human Race. A rich and avaricious man who was dangerously ill, called his family about him, in hopes of finding some one of them who was willing to die in his place. His first appeal for a substitute is to his Daughter. Her Husband immediately nips this plan in the bud.

'Quickly the Son-in-law comes to the fore,  
Oh Father-in-law, quoth he,

I grieve to say that your words to-day  
 Are as silly as words can be.  
 Your Son inherits your ample wealth,  
 While we have never a share,  
 Then why should the burden of Life and Death  
 Be laid upon *us* to bear ?'

女婿近前叫岳父。你今說話理不當。  
 萬貫家財兒擎受。爲何生死叫俺當。

Perceiving that he has no hope of a reprieve in this direction, the old man next summons his Son, and begs him to die in his Father's place. Upon this the Son's Wife promptly comes forward :

'In haste the Daughter-in-law draws near,  
 Oh Father-in-law quoth she,  
 I'm sorry to say that your words appear  
 Absurd to a high degree.  
 Death summons *you* and you ask your Son  
 To meet the messenger grim ;  
 Your Father died with you at his side—  
 Why did n't *you* die for *him* ?'

兒媳近前叫公爹。你今說話理上缺。  
 你的生死叫兒替。爲何當初不替爺。

Disappointed by his unfilial children, the dying man turns imploringly to his old Wife, and makes his petition to her. She responds :

'Each mortal eats to the full, and tries  
 To satisfy Number One,  
 So every mortal is born and dies,  
 And when he is dead he is done.  
 The heavy burden of Life and Death  
 You wish me to bear for thee,  
 But then *my* burden of Life and Death  
 Pray who is to bear for *me* ?'

各人吃飯各人飽。各人生死各人了。  
 你的生死叫我替。我的生死誰替了。

This exasperating unanimity of opposition to his request, puts the old man into a passion. He reminds them that all his property is of his own gathering, and since no one of them will take his place and allow him still to enjoy it, he will embarrass them with conditions as to its expenditure—conditions which they will not dare to disregard. His coffin is to be magnificent, and a part of his wealth is to be placed in it for his own use in the Shady Land, and espe-



cially is a gold coin to be put in his mouth for immediate use when wanted. The splendor of the funeral attracted universal notice, and the fact that treasure had been buried was notorious. On the very first night after the interment, a gang of robbers split open the coffin, and rifled its contents. The corpse was left on the ground, a prey to dogs, who soon scattered the bones, until nothing remained at the grave but the skull. A party of children were one day gathering fuel in the neighborhood, and finding the skull, struck it with their rakes. This produced a clinking sound, and upon examination they perceived the shining piece of gold within, and were unable to extract it, but this was at last effected by shattering the skull with a brick-bat. Just as this final act of despoliation was complete, *Han Hsiang tzu* (韓湘子), one of the Eight Immortals (八仙), chanced that way:

'Wide scattered now beside the road  
His bones lay on the ground;  
*Hsiang tzu* on his chariot-cloud  
Came navigating round.

'Ten thousand strings of cash, he cried,  
And goods of every kind  
This mortal owned, but when he died  
He left them all behind.

'What now has become of his ample wealth  
And his coffin so heavy and thick,  
It has gone to smash—and for only a cash  
His skull is split with a brick!'

湘子游走在雲端。觀見死尸在路邊。  
萬貫家財代不了去。一文錢換了頓半頭磚。

## CHAPTER V.

### ***Proverbs containing Allusions to Historical, Semi-Historical, Legendary, or Mythical Persons or Events.***

Every language abounds in references of this kind, and in Chinese, they are, to say the least, not less numerous than in other tongues. This redundancy of allusions in Chinese may be illustrated by a moment's consideration of the great variety which are perpetually recurring in the English of every day use, where they have become so numerous and diverse as to render classification extremely difficult. Thus we have, for example, simple historical references, often embodied in a phrase, like Noah's Ark, Magna Charta, etc.; semi-legendary allusions—as Prester John, St. George and the Dragon; mythical, as The Wandering Jew, The Man in the Moon, etc.; Mythological, as Jason and the Golden Fleece, Pluto and Proserpine, etc. (these are frequently crystallized into a single adjective, as Medusa-locked, Argus-eyed, Briarean-handed); allusions to Fables of Æsop and others, as the Mouse and the Lion, the Monkey and the Chestnuts, etc. (these likewise may be epitomized in a word or two, as Jackdaw feathers, 'Cats-paw,' etc); allusions to popular Nursery Tales, as Jack and the Bean-stalk, Old Mother Hubbard, Little Red Riding-hood, etc; references to tales or characters in fictitious literature, as the Arabian Nights, Gullivers' Travels, Robinson Crusoe, and Don Quixote. A mere mention of the novels of Dickens alone is sufficient to suggest the formidable rate at which this class of allusions multiply. Direct quotation of the words of well known characters: "Fear not! You carry Caesar;" "I am the state;" "England expects every man to do his duty." Besides all these, and many others, there are popular nicknames like John Bull, Brother Jonathan, etc., poetical names such as Emerald Isle, City of Palms, etc., etc.

It is no wonder that these various allusions when collected and explained, form compendious volumes, like Wheeler's *Noted Names of Fiction*, or Brewer's portly "*Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*," not half the available materials for which—as the author informs us—



could be utilized, for lack of space. Scarcely a year passes in which the issue of one or more such works of reference—now extending to every imaginable department—is not announced. The mere bibliography of dictionaries of this sort is becoming formidable. Now when we reflect that the greatest works in Chinese literature had become ancient some fifteen centuries before the English language was heard of, and that Chinese literature has gone on increasing in volume ever since, it will not seem strange that the raw material for all kinds of allusion has accumulated like the deposits at the delta of the Nile.\* The historical novel known as the Three Kingdoms (三國志) is alone the fountain head of a multitude of references—*Liu Pei*, *Chang Fei*, and *Kuan Yü* (劉備, 張飛, 關羽) are probably better known to the Chinese people as a whole than any three statesmen or generals of the past five hundred years. Even the place where they made their famous compact of brotherhood, is denoted by the simple expression 'Peach Orchard' (桃園), *the* Peach Orchard, that is to say, in Chinese history; and famous as they have become, it is by no means certain whether they have even yet reached the summit of their glory. *Kuan Yü* has been steadily advancing for more than six hundred and fifty years, since he was first canonized by a Sung Dynasty Emperor, until in our own time he has been promoted to be assistant of Heaven (協天大帝), the highest rank in the Chinese Pantheon. Merit in China is sometimes late in receiving its reward, but he who can afford

\* An examination of Mr. Wylie's "Notes on Chinese Literature" conveys a vivid impression of the enormous volume to which that literature must have grown. These "Notes"—a monument of learned industry—contain a list of about 1,770 works—besides hundreds of others included in the "Collection of Reprints"—many of which comprise within themselves whole Libraries. The second Emperor of the Sung Dynasty caused the preparation of an Encyclopedia of literature, completed in 1,000 books, and his example was immediately followed by the third Sung Emperor, who ordered the compilation of an historical Encyclopedia "comprehending the details of all state matters from the earliest times, chronologically arranged." This likewise overflowed into 1,000 books. These little brochures, however, pale their ineffectual fires in the presence of the work of *Yung Lé* (永樂), the third Emperor of the Ming Dynasty, who appointed a commission of scholars "to collect in one body the substance of all the classical, historical, philosophical, and literary works hitherto published, embracing Astronomy, Geography, the Occult Sciences, Medicine, Buddhism, Taoism, and the Arts." The work—executed by five chief and twenty sub-directors, with 2,169 subordinates—contained in all 22,877 books, besides the table of contents, which occupied 60 books more! The whole of this stupendous collection was written in beautiful characters with a pen, never having been printed. Only two copies are known to have been made, one of which is said to be in the British Museum, while the other (very incomplete) was largely destroyed at the burning of the Hanlin Yuan buildings, June, 1900, in an attack on the British Legation. Out of many thousand volumes only a few hundred were rescued, and these were speedily dispersed all over the world.



to wait one or two thousand years, need not despair of suitable recognition at last.

Theatrical performances, the scenes of which are often laid in some classic period of Chinese history, like the time of the Three Kingdoms, as well as the all-pervasive professional story-teller (說書的), found in cities at the tea-shops and in villages upon the streets, serve to keep in popular remembrance the mighty Heroes of distant ages.

There is also a third propagating power, more efficient than both the others combined. Almost every hamlet can furnish some, if not many persons, who have acquired education enough to devour with delight the stirring stories of the past. In all the northern parts of China there are months together when the rural population have almost no regular occupation. A company of Chinese, gathered of a long winter evening, will fall to relating the adventures of *Chu Ko Liang*, *Ssu Ma I*, and *Ts'ao Ts'ao* (諸葛亮, 司馬懿, 曹操), as our grandfathers told the tale of the career of Wellington in the Peninsula and the exploits of Napoleon in Egypt; or as in our own day we talk over the incidents of the great Indian Mutiny, or the details of Sherman's March to the Sea. By these means it comes to pass, that many illiterate persons, while familiar with the names of historical characters, and acquainted with certain events in which they played a prominent part, would be utterly unable to give the least account of their place in contemporaneous annals, or even to conjecture in what period of universal history they flourished.

The Chinese Scholar, who is supposed to be familiar not only with the standard histories of the Empire, but also with what is termed light literature, or 'empty books' (閒書), the perusal of which is but the diversion of a literary leisure—will of course be able to trace and fix historical allusions with considerable precision. As little or no value is, however, attached to books of this sort, nothing is more common than to find that persons who are really fairly educated in matters within the scope of classical knowledge, when asked to what epoch an individual with the outlines of whose life they are acquainted should be referred, differ among themselves by a matter of fifteen hundred or two thousand years. Such cases may be said to furnish a literal exemplification of the well known study of history without regard to time or place; and if history is

philosophy teaching by examples, it is of little consequence, provided the lesson is learned, to what period or locality the original is referred, nor is the value of the instruction held to be abated, though the supposed historical basis were shown to be altogether fabulous. The line which separates ancient history from the pre-historic fables of antiquity, is as invisible as a meridian; even far within historic times, there are abundant details which rest upon no certain evidence, so that as Lord Macaulay has observed with regard to some of the tales of Herodotus, "the fictions are so much like the facts, and the facts so much like the fictions, that with respect to many most interesting particulars, our belief is neither given nor withheld, but remains in an uneasy and interminable state of abeyance. We know that there is truth, but we cannot exactly decide where it lies."\*

That the Chinese are fond of suppressing a part of their meaning, both in the spoken and in the written language, has already been remarked, and will again fall under notice hereafter. An even stronger statement would seem to be justified by many observed facts, to wit that they at times suppress not a part of their meaning only, but almost the whole of it. A literary style abounding in delicate allusions, and recondite obscurities, is denoted by the expression: 'A Dragon-fly sipping water' (蜻蜓點水).† A writer or speaker will not infrequently positively revel in references of this sort, rolling each one as a sweet morsel under his tongue, and with the greater relish if he be reasonably confident that nine-tenths of his readers or hearers can by no possibility comprehend it. The obscurity of such allusions is greatly increased by the circumstance that many of them are simply the results of a kind of literary distillation, in the product of which it is often difficult to recognize any traces of the original.

\* It may be well again to remind the Reader that the sayings which belong to the class at present under consideration, are not viewed in their historical aspects. Some of these sayings refer to actual events, some to occurrences distorted or magnified by tradition, while others are palpably and wholly fictitious. Which of them are probably historically true, and which are probably false, the writer is entirely incompetent to decide, but fortunately, so far as their value as illustrations of the Proverbs and Common Sayings of the Chinese is concerned, the decision—could it be arrived at—would be of the smallest possible value.

† The Dragon-fly is supposed to eat nothing but to be satisfied with an occasional sip of water. Hence the poetical phrase quoted is employed metaphorically of one in extreme distress, who is helped by another's kind word, or timely advance of a little money, which enables him to go upon his way rejoicing: 'The Dragon-fly takes his sip of water, and flits away' (點水蜻蜓款款飛).



In the *Chinese Repository* for February, March, and April, 1851, is to be found a series of articles entitled "Extracts from Histories and Fables to which Allusions are commonly made in Chinese Literary Works, translated from the *Arte China* of P. Gonçalves by Dr. Bowring." The characters and subjects explained are distributed under 233 different heads, and range through the whole realm of History, Legend, Myth, and (occasionally) Fable. These articles were subsequently reprinted, in brief instalments, in the *Chinese and Japanese Repository* for the years 1863, 1864, and 1865, where we are informed that the concluding twelve examples are "Parables." It is, indeed, by no means always easy to determine to which of several classes such allusions should be referred. When we are told, for example, that the expression: 'To throw at a rat and [try to] miss the dish' (投鼠忌器), refers to a "fable" of a person who did throw a pillow at a rat, and thereby broke a costly vase, we have reached a region where a mere Illustration (比方), a Historical Allusion (典故), and a proper Fable—for which we know of no suitable Chinese expression—join their frontiers.

It has been supposed that for some occult reason, and apparently contrary to the antecedent probabilities in the case, genuine Fables do not agree with the literary climate of the Middle Kingdom. In the *Chinese and Japanese Repository* for November, 1863, appears, however, a notice of a translation into French of certain Indian and Chinese fables, in three volumes. "The honor of having discovered in the vast literature of the Celestial Empire the works eagerly sought for, is due to the eminent French sinologue Stan. Julien. They are contained in two encyclopedias, the elder of which, in twenty volumes, was finished in the year 668, and is entitled 'The Forest of Pearls from the Garden of the Law.'

The second is called 'Yü-lin, or the Forest of Similitudes,' and comprises, in twenty-four volumes, extracts from 400 purely Chinese works, and from 200 others that had been translated into Chinese from the Sanskrit." "If such a collection of fables had been generally known to exist in the literature of the country when R. Thom composed a Chinese version of 'Æsop's Fables,' the Mandarins to whom the latter work was communicated, would not have taken so much offence as to have ordered it to be suppressed."

A brief Essay on Chinese Fables is inserted in Dr. Martin's "Hanlin Papers" (reprinted in the United States under the title,



"The Chinese, their Education, Philosophy, and Letters")—a little monograph which might suggest the famous chapter 47 of Horrebow's History of Iceland, "Concerning Owls," consisting only of these words: "There are in Iceland no Owls of any kind whatever." In like manner the industry of the learned author of the Hanlin Papers succeeded in doing little more than predicating that there are no fables in Chinese, for the examples given are but five in number, nearly all of which are noticed in the articles already referred to in the *Chinese Repository*.

The first of these—said to have been spoken to the King of Ch'u by *Chiang Yi* (江乙), one of his ministers, with regard to a certain *Chou Hsi Hsü*, whose approach inspired terror in the people of the North—is brief. "A tiger who happened to be preceded by a fox, was greatly astonished to see all the animals running away from the fox, little suspecting that their terror was inspired by himself."

A fuller account is given in the translation from Père Gonçalves already referred to. A she-fox was overtaken by a tiger, which was about to destroy her. The fox remonstrated with the tiger, and claimed that she possessed a superiority over other animals, all of whom she declared, stood in awe of her. In proof of this, she invited the tiger to accompany her, and witness her power. The tiger consented, and quietly followed. Every beast fled at their approach, and the tiger dared not attack the fox, not considering that the terror was caused by his own appearance. Thereafter, whenever the fox was seen in public, the other animals suspected that the tiger—with whom she seemed to be on such intimate terms—was at her heels. Hence the saying: 'The fox arrogating the tiger's power' (狐假虎威).

A single additional example of Chinese apologue may suffice. It is given by Mr. Mayers (*Chinese Reader's Manual*, No. 933), as well as in the article on "History and Fables" quoted above from the "Narratives of the Contending States," and is ascribed to *Su Tai* 蘇岱, B.C. 350, and is thought by Mr. Mayers to be the earliest specimen of a complete fable on record in Chinese literature. The saying is of common occurrence, and is as follows: "When the bittern [or heron, osprey, or oyster-catcher] and the oyster seize each other, the fisherman reaps the benefit" (鷸蚌相持, 漁人得利). These instances illustrate the facility with which the essence of a

fable in Chinese, may be compressed into a sentence or a phrase, and thus while the kernel is preserved, the husk falls away and is quite forgotten.

The general character of the class of proverbial allusions which we are now considering can best be understood by examples. It must be borne in mind, however, that such allusions are by no means in themselves equivalent to proverbs. It is only when they have been caught up and molded into a popular shape that they come within the scope of the present classification. The part which they then play is an important one. More than fifty specimens of such proverbs may be found scattered through Mr. Scarborough's volume.

The most indispensable assistance for the student of Chinese, in the study of historical allusions, is to be found in the Manual of Mr. Mayers, to which reference has just been made. This valuable little book is the product of a process of evaporation and condensation, applied to a mass of Chinese Encyclopedias, and special works of reference, absolutely appalling to contemplate. The task was undertaken with the express purpose of furnishing a clew to some of the intricacies of quotation and allusion to which we have had such frequent occasion to refer, "and at the same time to bring together from various sources an epitome of historical and biographical details, much needed by every student." As the scope of the plan, however, was virtually coextensive with the entire range of Chinese literature, its complete execution—as the author soon discovered—was out of the question, resembling those seductive dreams of universal empire, the realization of which would be possible only to infinite resources.\*

Our first example is a couplet (from the *Ming Hsien Chi*) which is not self-explanatory: 'The Horse has the goodness to lower the bridle; The Dog has the good-will to moisten the grass' (馬有垂韁之義。狗有濕草之恩。). The dark saying is interpreted as an allusion to a horseman who fell down a well (or as others say, over a precipice), and whose steed dropped the bridle reins over his head, to enable his rider to climb up. The Dog in the other line, is said

\* NOTE.—Although Mayers' Manual is at present out of print, the references to it have been retained for the convenience of those who possess it. It has been partially—but only partially—supplanted by Prof. Giles' Biographical Dictionary, a large and scholarly work built on Mr. Mayers' foundation, unfortunately much too expensive for popular use. As Chinese authorities vary, the summaries of those accounts given by foreigners will differ also. Let it not be forgotten that the references which follow are not to certified history, but to Chinese popular conceptions—not infrequently a quite different matter.  
[1914—Mayer's Manual can now be had in a revised edition.]



to have found the grass, in the neighborhood of his master's house, on fire; no help being at hand, he rushed into a pond, and coming out rolled over and over upon the ground about the building, thus effectually preventing the spread of the flames.

'The old man who lived outside the Great Wall, losing his horse—good luck, after all' (塞翁失馬。莫非是福。). This individual lost his horse, upon which others condoled with him. To this he replied, "Who knows but it is fortunate?" When the horse afterwards returned, his neighbors exclaimed, "How lucky," but he replied, "Who knows but it is a misfortune?" And so it was, for his son rode the horse and broke his own leg by being thrown. Upon this, while others again sympathized, the old man (who, like a morning dream, always went by contraries) again observed: "Who knows but it is a piece of good fortune?" And so it proved, for a horde of banditti soon came, and impressed all the young men in the neighborhood, but the son of the old man being a cripple escaped.

'Tip us the wink, said Iron Staff Li,  
Then I'll cheat you, and you'll cheat me.'

鉄拐李。 把眼擠。  
你糊弄我。我糊弄你。

'Li Iron Staff,' or the 'Iron Staff Teacher' (鉄拐先生) was one of the Eight Immortals (八仙). See Mayers' *Manual*, No. 718. According to tradition, he was much grieved at the infatuation of the human race, especially in the mad race for wealth. The purport of the satirical advice in this couplet, is that since everything that exists was bestowed by Heaven, such distinctions as *meum* and *tuum* are entirely arbitrary, and at longest cannot outlast the lives of the present owners. Let us then shut our eyes, and cheat and be cheated as much as we can.

'When a dog bites *Lü Tung Pin*, it is because he does not know a true man when he sees one' (狗咬呂洞賓、不認的真人。). *Lü Tung Pin* was one of the most famous of the Taoist patriarchs, and one of the Eight Immortals. See Mayers' *Manual*, No. 467. The saying is used of a good man, who is misunderstood.

'The tyrant *Chou* perished in the year *Chia Tzū*, while the good founder of the *Chou* Dynasty established his kingdom in the very same year' (紂以甲子亡。周以甲子興。). This saying is used to show that a particular year is in itself neither good nor



bad, but that success or defeat depends upon the character and actions of men themselves.

'They are a well matched pair, *Fei Chung* and *Yu Hun*' (他兩個是一對費仲尤渾。). These were two wicked ministers of *Chou Wang* (紂王), whose evil reign closed the Shang Dynasty. They are regarded as ideals of all that is bad in ministers. The expression is used of two persons irredeemably vicious.

'If you were *Chang T'ien Shih* and *Li T'ien Wang* combined, I should not be afraid of you' (你就是張天師、李天王,我也不怕。). *Chang T'ien Shih* has been already referred to. (Mayers' *Manual*, No. 35). *Li T'ien Wang* or *No Ch'a T'ai Tzu* (那吒太子) is represented as existing at the time of the founding of the *Chou* Dynasty. According to the popular belief, he held in his hand a Pagoda, but in Mayers' *Manual* (No. 520) this is explained as having been a mistaken interpretation of the thunderbolt which he grasped. This golden pagoda, seven inches in height, was capable of flight, and could be expanded to the altitude of eighty feet, after which it would return to its original proportions. On this account, *No Ch'a* is often called the Heavenly King who supports the Pagoda (托塔天王).

The book in which legends relating to *Li T'ien Wang* are popularized is called the *Feng Shen Yen I* (封神演義) q. d.: "The Romance of the Deification of the Gods," by *Chiang T'ai Kung* (姜太公), who is the Hero. It is a kind of Taoist Wonder Book, as full of fables as the *Travels of Baron Munchausen*, and its title, like the name of that adventurer, has come to be a synonym for extravagant mendacity. The last two characters of this title—referring to the *unreality* of theatrical representations—are sometimes used alone in the sense of *false*, as in the saying, *Chiang T'ai Kung* making obeisance [to the symbols which confirmed him in office] as General—pure stuff," 姜太公拜帥演義. The meaning is, that this is one of the idle stories of the *Idle Story Book*, but as in many other current Chinese sayings, the underlying assumption is wrong. This incident is said to be historical, while most of the others are fictitious.

"*Chiang T'ai Kung* telling fortunes; when one's luck failed he declared there was no remedy for it" (姜太公算卦。倒運難治。). See Mayers' *Manual*, No. 257. He was once a fortune teller, before he became councillor of *Hsi Po* (西伯), (12th century, B.C.).

His eccentric habit of angling with a straight iron rod, thus offering as little inducement as possible to the fishes (who were attracted simply by his virtue), has given rise to the familiar saying: '*Chiang Tai Kung* fishing—only those that are willing are taken (姜太公釣魚, 愿者上钩,.) employed as an illustration of spontaneity of action. (See Scarborough, No. 436). He is supposed to have sat upon his fishing perch, in entire disregard of the entreaties of the numerous ministers of State who begged him to come down, and mix in Chou Dynasty politics. Hence the proverb: 'See him seated on his fishing-terrace; he will not move' (看他穩坐釣魚台的不動,) of one who takes no interest in an affair. It was not until the King himself besought him that he came down, and exchanged his straight rod for the staff of civil office.

'When Fortune deserted Confucius, he was stopped by the troops of *Ch'en* and *Ts'ai*' (孔子無時困陳蔡,.) This refers to the well known event in the life of the Sage, when he was prevented from entering *Ch'u* (楚) as he intended, lest his good government should make that state so powerful as to absorb all its smaller neighbors.

'Heaven gives *Yen Hui* an ingot of gold; such wealth cannot enrich one fated to be poor' (天賜顏回一錠金, 外財不富命窮人,.) The favorite disciple of Confucius was extremely poor, One day a piece of silver was missed, and the suspicions of the other pupils of the Sage fell upon *Yen Hui*, because of his well known poverty. The next day *Tseng tzu* placed an ingot of gold upon *Yen Hui's* table with the inscription as above. 'Given to *Yen Hui* by Heaven.' When *Yen Hui* arrived and saw it, he added the succeeding line, and placed the gold to one side, without looking at it.

#### SAYINGS RELATING TO THE TIME OF THE CONTENDING

##### KINGDOMS (列國).

'*Su Ch'in* is *Su Ch'in* still; the clothes are changed, but not the man' (蘇秦還是蘇秦, 換了衣裳未換人,.) A celebrated statesman of the Contending Kingdoms. While struggling as a poor scholar, his mother, his brother, and his wife all treated him with contempt. When subsequently he became a Councillor of the Six States, and returned to his home with all the seals of office dangling from his girdle, his whole family repented their former



behavior, and were greatly at a loss how to atone for it. On that memorable occasion, he is supposed to have uttered this saying, and the one quoted by Mr. Scarborough, No. 2630, 'When one is poor, his parents disown him; when he is rich, relations revere him.' See also Mayers' *Manual*, No. 626.

'The ministers of every dynasty will be like the Emperors of that dynasty' (一朝天子一朝臣). This saying is attributed to *Kan Lo* (甘羅), the precocious boy-minister of Chinese history (B.C. 260), who at the age of twelve years was entrusted by a King of one of the Contending States, with an important message to another sovereign. To his master's natural apprehension lest *Kan Lo* should after all fail, he is said to have made this reply, signifying that if the Emperor is a man of preeminent ability, his purposes will be accomplished even with ministers of no extraordinary talent. He calls whom he pleases, and those whom he calls must please him. In the present dynasty, a descendant of the famous *Ch'in Kuei* (秦檜), (see Mayers' *Manual*, No. 783), whose name has been covered with obloquy because he counselled peace with northern barbarians, became Senior Wrangler (狀元). The Emperor said to him: "Your ancestor in the Sung dynasty was a traitor; see that you do not resemble him." The distinguished scholar aptly cited in reply, the words of *Kan Lo*: "Each dynasty has ministers who are like its Emperor," q.d. my ancestor may have been in fault, but then the Sung Emperor was a different person from the present occupant of the throne. Mr. Scarborough (No. 2,090) quotes this saying without explanation, and effectually eliminates all its meaning by the translation: 'Each dynasty has its Sons of Heaven and its ministers.'

'*Tao Cho*, the ancestral preceptor of Thieves' (盜跖乃賊的祖師). According to tradition, there was an individual of the time of the Distracted Kingdoms, whose surname was *Chan* (展) and who was canonized as *Hui* (惠). From his holding the government of *Liu Hsia* under the authority of *Lu* (魯), he has come to be known generally as *Liu Hsia Hui* (柳下惠), (see Mayers' *Manual*, No. 403) and is regarded as one of the historical Model Men (君子). The proverb quoted refers to his own elder brother, who is said to have been a Chinese outlaw or Robin-hood of those early days. The story shows how 'The fruit of one tree may be sour and sweet; the sons of the same mother



perverse and virtuous' (一樹之菓有酸有甜, 一母之子有愚有賢.).

'The crafty policy of borrowing a road to exterminate the *Kao* State' (假塗滅虢之法.). *Yü* (虞) and *Kuo* (虢) were two small States, which stood to each other in the relation of 'lips and teeth' (結爲唇齒之交.). The great state of *Chin* (晉) had often sought means to overcome them, but as they always mutually assisted each other, they maintained their independence. At length by advice of a crafty minister, the ruler of *Chin* sent the ruler of *Yü* a magnificent Horse, so that when the former wished to ask the favor of a passage through his territories to attack the *Kuo* State, the ruler of *Yü* could no longer refuse. Thus was acted out the old story of the Lion and the Four Bulls, for when *Kuo* was subdued, *Yü* soon followed.

'*Yen Ying* of the *Ch'i* State, killed three counsellors with two peaches' (齊晏子二桃殺三士.). The Duke of *Ch'i* made a great feast for his Ministers. Two magnificent peaches were offered by the prince to the two who according to their own estimate were most worthy of them. Two generals having given an account of their merits, the peaches were adjudged to them. After the peaches had been eaten, another general came forward with a narrative of his merits, which proved to be so much greater than those of the others, that the first two ministers were filled with mortification, which they exhibited in the characteristic Chinese method by suicide. Upon this, the third general, indignant that his comrades should have been sacrificed to a peach, died himself! This plan is said to have been arranged by *Yen Ying* (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 917) because he perceived that the influence of the three generals over the ruler of *Ch'i* was becoming unduly great. Hence of one who contrives a plot to injure several persons at once, it is said, 'He manages to ruin three worthies at the same time.'

'Accomplishing one's work by means of others' (因人成事者也.). *Mêng Ch'ang Chün* (孟嘗君), whose name was *T'ien Wên* (田文), was a prominent man in the State of *Ch'i* (齊). He had a great number of friends and adherents gathered about him, to a total of three thousand, each of whom had his own abilities, and they were divided into upper, middle, and lower classes. When it became desirable for the Prince of *Ch'i* to make a league with the Prince of *Ch'u* (楚), it was necessary, on account of a long-standing

enmity between the two rulers, that the ambassadors should be men skilled both in civil and military affairs. The enterprise was entrusted to *T'ien Wên*, who was to be accompanied by nineteen others selected from among his three thousand guests. He succeeded in selecting nineteen (including himself), but although he scrutinized the list of the remaining 2,982 persons in quest of another ambassador, he scrutinized it in vain, for the abilities of the greater part of *T'ien Wên's* "guests" do not appear to have been of a diplomatic nature.

At this point one of the "third class guests," whose name was *Mao Sui* (毛遂), came forward and proposed himself as a candidate for the vacancy. At this proposition every one laughed heartily, for *Mao Sui* had no abilities, either civil or military, whereas the service in hand required both, and his principal achievement in life hitherto had been to eat and sleep. Never a word had he spoken, never a plan had he conceived. *T'ien Wên's* knowledge of men was great, but *Mao Sui* was so inferior and generally unprepossessing in appearance, being singularly lean withal, that *T'ien Wên* had never estimated him at a high rate. *Mao Sui* then spoke two or three sentences to *T'ien Wên*, who promptly assented to his offer. When the diplomatic party were admitted to an interview with the King of *Ch'u* none of them could say a word, and for the space of more than ten days the proposed treaty made no progress whatever. But one day *Mao Sui* at a royal interview held such an arrogant demeanor, and used such lofty language, that the Prince of *Ch'u* was much pleased, and at once assented to the treaty, which was immediately signed. Thereupon *Mao Sui* not unnaturally observed to the other nineteen ambassadors, 'Of what use is your civil and military ability, when it may be said of you that after all you do your work by the aid of others' (因人成事者也). His diplomatic compeers, upon this, confessed their fault. The patient Reader who bestows discriminating attention upon the minutiae of tales of this sort, will receive a vivid impression of the trivialities and inconsequential absurdities of Chinese history, as seen in some of its popular aspects. The expression cited is used of those who follow after and share in the glory, when others have done the work.

"The Jade restored uninjured to the state of *Chao*; Pearls returning to *Ho P'u*" (完璧歸趙, 合浦珠還). The first clause relates to an incident of the *Lieh Kuo* (列國). A precious jade



seal (玉璽) had fallen into the hands of the State of *Chao* (趙). The Prince of *Ch'in* (秦), in the hope of gaining the treasure by guile, offered twelve cities as an equivalent for its possession. The ruler of *Chao* understood the plot, but could not refuse the exchange. No one wished to go upon the dangerous errand which was involved, until a man named *Lin Hsiang Ju* (藺相如) came forward, and offered to take the gem to the King of *Ch'in*. The jade which he carried is in some accounts represented as a false one. When the delivery of the cities was refused, the original gem was restored perfect and uninjured to the ruler of *Chao*, without prejudice to his dignity, by the skill of *Lin Hsiang Ju*. See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 393.

*Ho P'u Hsien* (合浦縣), a city within the jurisdiction of Canton, is noted for its pearls. When the District Magistrate is upright and pure, the pearls are produced in abundance. If, however, he should be avaricious the supply ceases. The saying quoted, refers to *Meng Ch'ang* (孟嘗), (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 490), whose virtuous rule brought back the pearls which had been driven away by the extortions of his predecessors. The words are used of lost things restored.

"Bearing rods on his back, and asking for punishment" (背負荊條請罪). This saying relates to the same *Lin Hsiang Ju* mentioned in the last paragraph. He was of humble birth, and had been a slave, but his great abilities secured him employment. His success in the difficult matter of the jade seal, raised him to the highest rank. The chief military counsellor of the ruler of *Chao*, *Lien P'o* (廉頗) was angry at this promotion, and threatened to beat *Lin*, if he met him in public. Knowing this, *Lin* avoided *Lien P'o*. When asked why a Minister of the highest rank, as he now was, should fear a military man like *Lien P'o*, he replied smiling: "The only security of the State of *Chao* against its neighbors, is in its civil and military officers. 'Civil government tranquilizes a State, military rule settles a Kingdom' (文能安邦, 武能定國). The military administration of *Chao* is vested in *Lien P'o*, and its civil administration is in my hands. If we should come to a rupture, disasters to the country would speedily ensue. If I was not afraid of the King of *Ch'in* when he refused to exchange the cities for the jewel as he promised, it is not likely that I fear *Lien P'o*, and why should I imperil great interests for the sake of a private grudge,



for every State is superior to his in strength." This patriotic reply was reported to *Lien P'o*, who was thus led to reflection, and became so ashamed of his behavior that he came to the door of *Lin Hsiang Ju* with a bundle of rods bound to his bare back, and there knelt, requesting punishment. This resulted in a permanent friendship between the General and the Statesman!

'The beneficent league of *Ch'in* and *Chin*; the indissoluble union of the families of *Chu* and *Ch'en*' (秦晉良緣. 朱陳締好). The States of *Ch'in* and *Chin* were incessantly at war, but at last made a treaty of perpetual peace. The families of *Chu* and *Ch'en*, belonging to one of the Contending States, lived in a place called Almond Flower Village (杏花村), where they were the only persons of wealth. In consequence of this, each family contracted marriages only with the other, so that in time the house of *Chu* and that of *Ch'en* became inextricably intertwined. This saying is employed in forming matrimonial engagements, vows of friendship, etc., to indicate the permanent nature of the contracts.

'Even *Ho* and *Huan* cannot cure one of worms in the heart' (和緩難醫心中恙). These were two famous physicians of the *Ch'in* State, whose skill was so great that they could almost bring the dead to life. *Yang* (恙) is a disease caused by worms in the heart. The Imperial Dictionary of *K'ang Hsi* informs us that in ancient times persons who 'lived in the grass' were extremely liable to this form of attack. Hence when asked as to one's health, it became customary to reply: "I am not troubled with worms" (無恙). According to popular belief, however, everyone has worms in the heart. When they are at rest they cause no disturbance, but the least motion generates disease, often ending fatally. The saying is used to show that an evil heart cannot be cured.

"When the disease has entered the *Kao-huang* there is no help for it" (病入膏肓不能爲了). The ruler of *Chin* fell dangerously ill. A Minister went to the State of *Ch'in* to invite *Ho* and *Huan*\* to come and treat the case. Before the physicians arrived, the Prince of *Chin* dreamed that he saw two little men of an extremely malevolent appearance, coming out of his own nose. They sat and frolicked upon the bed, and held a professional consultation. "Before long," said one of them, "*Ho* and *Huan*, the

\* Others say that it was *Pien Ch'iao* (扁鵲) who was called in. See *Mayers Manual*, No. 553, 2.

famous physicians of *Oh'in* will be here, and then we shall be out of business." "No fear of that," said the other, "we can hide under the *kao* (膏) and over the *huang* (黃 wrongly read *mang*), where the doctors cannot find us." As soon as *Huan* arrived and felt the pulses of his distinguished patient, he unhesitatingly affirmed that nothing could be done for him, for the disease had entered the *Kao-huang*, which is explained as being inaccessible to acupuncture, because a membrane covers the heart which no one dares to pierce. The *Kao* is immediately under the heart. The saying is used of anything incurable.

SAYINGS RELATING TO THE HAN DYNASTY AND THE TIME  
OF THE THREE KINGDOMS.

'*Chu Mao Ch'en* divorcing his wife—spilt water hard to gather up' (朱買臣休妻、潑水難收). This was a scholar of the Han dynasty, who was so poor as to be obliged by day to gather fuel for a living, and to study at night. His wife regarded his prospects as hopeless, and asked to 'be excused'—in other words, to obtain a release from her husband, that she might remarry elsewhere. In spite of the urgent entreaties of *Chu Mai Ch'en* she persisted in her request, and was accordingly divorced. By the time he had become a Prefect, or as others say Senior Wrangler, his wife was reduced to begging for a subsistence, and implored her former husband to receive her again as his wife. He replied by telling her to pour water upon the ground, which she did, when he ordered her to gather it up, adding that when she had done so her prayer would be granted. Hence the expression 'spilt water hard to gather,' has become a synonym for the irreparable past.

'Will your Excellency kindly enter the jar?' (請君入甕). A certain Emperor had a minister who was guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors. Instead of punishing him directly, His Majesty commanded an official of less rank than the offender, to contrive in some way to administer a reproof. The difference in the rank of the officers, made this an extremely difficult undertaking. The lesser officer, however, called upon the minister and related a supposititious case of an official who had been guilty of certain grave offences, and inquired what should be done to such an evil-doer. The Minister, unsuspecting of the snare laid for him, declared that a great jar should be prepared full of oil, into which the culprit should



be put, and then fire should be applied until he was cooked. Upon hearing this sentence, the crafty interrogator replied: "Will your Excellency please to enter that jar?" The words are used as equivalent to the answer of Nathan to David: "Thou art the man!"

'Breaking up the cooking boilers, and sinking the boats—a desperate resolution' (破釜沈舟的。細講。). This refers to *Hsiang Ohi* (項籍), (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 165) otherwise known as *Pa Wang* of *Ch'u* (楚霸王), B.C. 201. On occasion of crossing the Yellow River to fight a decisive battle, he sank his boats—a proceeding imitated by Cortez in Mexico seventeen centuries later—and broke up the camp kettles, to render retreat impossible. Met. Victory or death.

That large class of Foreigners in China, who have long and ineffectually struggled either to master the ordinary requirements of Chinese ceremony, or to get rid of it altogether, will hail with enthusiasm the following traditional shiver in regard to the customs of this same *Pa Wang*. "*Pa Wang* inviting guests—brusque manners" \* (霸王請客硬上弓。). He is said to have been as much disgusted as the modern Barbarian with the inevitable courteous scuffles which ensue whenever Chinese meet, and took an advantage of his authority (unhappily impossible for a Foreigner) to cut short the polite dispute. Seizing each one of his guests by the shoulders, he jerked him into a seat, with the observation: "You sit *there*!" This alone would have accounted for (as it certainly justifies) the immortality which his name has enjoyed for about two thousand years.

'*Han Hsin*, though defeated an hundred times, by a single battle established his merit; *Pa Wang*, though an hundred times victorious, by a single battle ruined his country and lost his life.' (韓信百敗。一戰成功。霸王百勝。一戰敗國亡身。). For an account of *Han Hsin*, see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 156. Reference has been already made to *Pa Wang*. See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 165. His great stature, his coarse manners, and his savage brutality, have given his name an undying immortality of infamy. *Pa Wang*, it

\* More literally, '*Pa Wang*, in inviting guests, put the cord on his bow in a violent manner.' A Chinese bow is so inflexible, that even adepts in military feats are often obliged to lean upon it with all their weight, in order to bend it sufficiently to slip on the cord. *Pa Wang*, however, whose strength was enormous, disdained such methods, and seizing his bow in both hands, bent it with the muscles of his wrists. His treatment of his guests was conducted in a similarly abrupt manner.



is said, was only a Monkey, washed and capped (霸王乃沐猴而冠者也。) His bad qualities have been explained by a fable similar to that concerning Romulus and Remus, as in the following lines:—

'The origin of old King *Pa* was like no living thing—  
Of Dragons born, by Tigers nursed, and screened by Eagle's wing;  
He learned when grown to man's estate the spear and sword to wield,  
Prepared against ten thousand foes alone to take the field,  
Then having learned the martial art, he left the eastern shore  
Eight-thousand pupils following on when *Pa Wang* went before.  
He would not heed the warning words of *Fan Tseng* to his cost,  
And thus a thousand victories, alas! were wholly lost.'

霸王生身本不凡。龍生虎乳鵬打扇。  
長大成人學擊劍。一心要學萬人戰。  
及至學成離東岸。只因不聽范增勸。  
八千子弟走江東。可惜枉費千場戰。

'When the Superior Man has no Fortune, he waits for Fortune. *Han Hsin* once stooped to go under a man's legs' (君子無時且耐時。韓信曾爲跨下夫。) The story is that *Han Hsin* in his early days, was passing along a road where two young bullies stopped his progress, and compelled him to stoop under their legs, or not go by at all. Unable to resist, *Han Hsin* submitted, but when he became Prince of *Ch'i* (齊王) he followed up these individuals, whom he made into animated horse-blocks, requiring one of them to bend over, so that *Han Hsin* should step on his shoulder as he mounted his steed, and the other was employed in the same way when he dismounted. Thus he was amply revenged. See *Mayers' Manual* (No. 156) where, however, a different version is given.

'Imitate the sworn fidelity of the Three in the Peach Orchard; do not imitate *Sun Pin* and *P'ang Ch'uan*' (寧學桃園三結義。不學孫憤共龐涓。) "The Three" are *Liu Pei*, *Kuan Yü*, and *Chang Fei*, as already mentioned. The weak Emperor then upon the throne, felt himself unable to cope with the formidable Yellow Turbaned Rebels (黃巾賊), the Tai p'ings of that day, and called for brave men to assist in upholding the government. *Liu Pei* while reading the Imperial Proclamation calling for men to come forward and save the State, sighed as he reflected on the magnitude of the task and the lack of suitable volunteers. At this juncture

*Kuan Yü* arrives, an entire stranger to *Liu Pei*, and inquires why a man of lofty spirit should show such feelings in view of his country's troubles. Struck with the noble mien and bearing of *Kuan Yü*, *Liu Pei* invited him into a neighboring wine shop, where they discussed the situation. Soon after *Chang Fei* entered, a stranger to them both, whereupon his prepossessing appearance led to an invitation to join the two new friends over their cups. Warmed with the wine, and fired with patriotism, they soon adjourned to a Peach Orchard\* belonging to *Chang Fei*, who was rich, where they took the famous oath of brotherhood, which remains to the present day the ideal of fraternal union. The history of the adventures of these remarkable men forms a considerable part of the popular "History of the Three Kingdoms," already referred to, a work, the influence of which upon the myriads of China, it would be difficult to exaggerate. Temples to *Kuan Yü*, *Liu Pei*, and *Chang Fei* are common, and are called *San I Miao* (三義廟).

'When *Liu Pei* was a stranger to Fortune, he braided mats, and sold straw shoes' (劉備無時織蓆販草鞋). See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 415.

'Like *K'ung Ming*—a person of great wisdom' (屬孔明的。見識不少。). "The great councillor of *Liu Pei*, who owed to the sagacity and military skill of *K'ung Ming* his success in establishing himself upon the throne." See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 88. He is known also as *Chu-Ko Liang* (諸葛亮) and is one of the most famous men of one of China's most famous eras.

'Though the fire burned the *Shang Fang* valley, it was not the will of Heaven that *Ssu Ma* should perish' (火燒上方谷, 天意不絕司馬). *Ssu Ma I* was a famous general under *Ts'ao Ts'ao* at the time of the Three Kingdoms. (See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 655). He was once hard pressed by his distinguished antagonist *Chu-Ko Liang* (*K'ung Ming* 孔明, see above), who hemmed him in within a deep valley, where it was equally difficult either to advance or to retreat. Fire was then set to the underbrush, so that the horses all perished, as well as all the men, with the ex-

\* NOTE.—This Peach Orchard was situated a few li south of the city of Cho-chou, now a railway station between Peking and Pao-ting-fu. There is a large temple there in commemoration of the event. *Chang Fei*'s huge iron spear is still to be seen on the bridge near by, and the whole region abounds with reminiscences of this period, the events of which are perennially fresh in the popular mind.



ception of *Ssu Ma I* and his two sons, who having dismounted embraced each other with tears, in momentary expectation of destruction. At this critical juncture, a heavy rain fell, which extinguished the fire. *Chu-Ko Liang* dared not disobey the mandate of heaven, and allowed his prisoners to escape. The saying is used in reference to any signal providential intervention to save life.

'*Liu Pei* throwing down his child to win men's hearts' (劉備摔孩子、邀買人心). The first Emperor of the Minor Han Dynasty (one of the Three Kingdoms) who owed so much, as stated above, to *Chu-Ko Liang*. A favorite general named *Chao Yün* (趙雲), on occasion of the defeat of *Liu Pei* by *Ts'ao Ts'ao*, carried the son of *Liu Pei* in his bosom, fighting and fleeing by turns. When he reached his master, and delivered up the young prince to his father, his own body was covered with severe wounds. *Liu Pei* dashed his child on the ground, exclaiming that his general's entire body was nothing but gall-bladder (courage). "Alas! that he should receive such wounds for a child of mine." There seems no reason to question the sincerity of *Liu Pei* in this famous incident; the expression has, however, grown into proverbial use as equivalent to stealing men's hearts. See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 54 and No. 415.

'With the body of a sheep, clothed in a Tiger's skin, merits can never be achieved.'

'When the feathers of the Phoenix are united to the liver of a Chicken, it is hard to accomplish results' (羊質虎皮功不就、鳳毛雞胆事難成). This couplet was made at the expense of *Yuan Shao* (袁紹), (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 967) who was unsuccessful in his military adventures. *Chu-Ko Liang* is said to have remarked of troops of *Yuan Shao*, under the leadership of *Ts'ao Ts'ao*, that they were an assemblage of Ants or a gathering of Crows (蟻聚之多、烏合之衆), formidable only in appearance, but dispersed as soon as collected. This last expression is used of friends, who, though numerous, are not to be depended upon in an emergency.

'Although there may be thousands of words under his pen, yet if in his breast there is no skill in plan, it is not true scholarship' (筆下雖有千言、胸中寔無一策、非真學也). This is one of several sayings attributed to *Chu-Ko Liang* in reference to a Minister of the Eastern Wu.



'A large granary robbed of a chestnut—a floating leaf from a great tree' (大倉減一栗, 大樹飄一葉). This refers to an incident in the wars of the Three Kingdoms, when *Chu-Ko Liang* told *Chou Yü* (周瑜) that two persons dismissed from the vast host at their command, and sent to the enemy, would be no more missed than a chestnut from a granary, or a leaf from a tree.

'Plentiful as the seeds in a cart-load of grain' (車載斗量之多). This is another splinter of the stories of the Three Kingdoms. *Liu Chang* (劉璋) was governor of *Ssu Ch'uan* (四川) and despatched *Chang Sung* (張松) to the Capital (許都) to see the prince *Han Hsien Ti* (漢獻帝). *Chang Sung* was a great scholar, and a person of importance. Before obtaining an audience, it was necessary to see *Ts'ao Ts'ao* (曹操), whose well known brusque manners so offended *Chang Sung*, that he contrived to revile and abuse *Ts'ao Ts'ao*, yet in such oblique fashion, that the latter, although deeply exasperated, was quite at a loss for a reply. *Chang Sung* was a person of far too much importance to be secretly put out of the way, and no obvious method of retaliation presented itself. When *Chang Sung* took his leave, *Ts'ao Ts'ao* deputed another scholar named *Yang Hsiu* (楊修) to do the proper honors. The two fell to discussing various subjects, but *Yang Hsiu's* scholarship, although great, was unequal to the demands of *Chang Sung*. Among other subjects the art of war was introduced, and *Yang Hsiu* exhibited with pride a three volume treatise on military subjects, which had been composed by *Ts'ao Ts'ao* himself. This work being submitted to *Chang Sung*, he glanced at it as he rapidly turned over the leaves, and exclaimed contemptuously: "*Ts'ao Ts'ao* never wrote this; it was done ages ago by a mere child, and is of no merit whatever." *Yang Hsiu* demanding his authority for such a slander, he replied that in *Ssu Ch'uan* every little boy could repeat it. "Then," said *Yang Hsiu*, "do you repeat it and I will listen." So *Chang Sung*—who in reality had never seen the book before in his life—began at the first chapter and repeated the whole three volumes from beginning to end without missing a single character. In China nothing could more securely establish the claims of any one to vast scholarship than such a feat as this, for in this country the man who remembers everything is the man who knows every-

thing.\* *Yang Hsiu* was astonished beyond measure, and exclaimed: This book is indubitably the work of *Ts'ao Ts'ao*. For you to have committed it to memory at a glance is a proof of your transcendent abilities. Pray how many scholars can *Ssu Ch'uan* produce who are like you? "Like me?" replied *Chang Sung* scornfully, "Like me? Why persons of my abilities are as plentiful in *Ssu Ch'uan* as the grains in a cart-load of millet!"

'Like *Lu Su*; no decision' (屬魯肅的, 沒主意老大哥). A man of the time of the Three Kingdoms, belonging to the Eastern Wu, without resolution.

'When the nest falls, there are no whole eggs' (覆巢無完卵). This was the wise remark of a lad in the time of the Three Kingdoms, whose father was condemned to death, and who refused to fly, as escape was impossible.

#### SAYINGS RELATING TO THE T'ANG DYNASTY.

'Little golden lilies—an insecure footing' (金蓮小只怕站不穩當.) This refers to a legend of *Yao Niang* (宵娘) (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 906) the beautiful concubine of *Li Yü* (李煜) of the Southern T'ang Dynasty, which collapsed A.D. 975. *Yao Niang* was light and graceful, and danced elegantly. The prince ordered an artificer to make golden lily-flowers with movable petals, so that from the apartments of *Yao Niang* to the principal palace was a continuous pavement of golden lilies, upon which the steps of *Yao Niang* seemed rather to resemble flying than walking. Still the prince was not quite satisfied, and desired her to cause her feet to simulate a lily bud unopened, which would be perfection itself. *Yao Niang* therefore bethought herself of white silk bandages, with which her feet were soon compressed, until at length they were reduced to three inches in length, or the size of an average bud. Arrayed in her red shoes, as she flitted along on the golden lilies, she attained the very beau-ideal of graceful movement. By the time of the Sung Dynasty the fashion of compression had become universal, and has continued so ever since, except among the Tartars—

\* The high estimate placed upon this faculty of absorbing information accurately by a mere glance, is illustrated in the saying: 'A quickness of perception which renders one able to recite whatever has once met the eye' (過目成誦的聰明). So also: 'Reading off the inscription on a stone tablet, while passing on horseback' (走馬觀碑). As these inscriptions often extend to hundreds of characters, this feat is regarded as evidencing abilities which 'beat the world' (絕世之大才).



the reigning dynasty—who dominate the fashions in and about the Capital. To the present day small feet are the badge, not merely of fashion, but of respectability. It is due to *Yao Niang* (as is supposed), that the term 'golden lilies' (金蓮) refers to women's feet, and that

"Two little stumps, mere pedal lumps,  
In Ch na, you know, are reckoned trumps."

The expression above is used of anything unstable, as a house with insecure foundations. This legend is related in different forms, and is perhaps quite destitute of any historical authenticity.

'Submission to the T'ang Dynasty on two occasions' (二番投唐). This saying refers to an incident in the life of *Li Mi* (李密), (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 359), who is said to have gone with *Ch'in Ch'ung* (秦窮) and others to cast in his lot with the founder of the T'ang Dynasty, but turned aside after going a part of the way. At a later period he went again. The expression is used as a circumlocution to indicate that a thing has been done *twice*, or that it has been unnecessarily repeated several times.

'Do not underrate *Ching Té* when he happens to be without his accoutrements' (你別看着敬德沒披掛). This saying refers to *Yü-Ch'ih Kung* (尉遲恭), a famous hero at the troublous period when the T'ang Dynasty was founded. His skill and prowess as a knight were unsurpassed, and on account of his merits as guardian of the second T'ang Emperor against evil spirits, he has come to be regarded as one of two Divine Doorkeepers (門神) whom the Chinese worship to the present day. See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 945. The story is that *Yü-Ch'ih Kung*, whose 'style' was *Ching Té* (敬德), went out to battle on one occasion without his usual armor, and suffered in consequence. The expression is used as a caution against the attempt to impose on one who appears to be without friends and backers—like *Ching Té* without helmet or breast-plate—but who is in reality a formidable antagonist.

"*Ch'eng Yao Chin's* battle-axe—only three blows" (程咬金的斧子. 只有三着兒). In the Chinese military art the several modes of attack with different weapons are called *Lu* (路), corresponding in a manner to the different openings of a game of chess. Each style of attack, or *Lu*, consists of a great variety of thrusts, each with its counter parry or pass, like the moves and the replies in chess, and like them called *chao*. Thus the sword has twelve



kinds of attack (十二路) the double sword eight, and the heavy lance seventy-two. *Ch'eng Yao Chin*, a T'ang Dynasty warrior, was an impetuous individual, and when actually in battle forgot all the thirty-two modes of attack with the battle-axe, excepting one, and forgot all the passes or blows of this attack, save only three (只有三着兒). Used of any one who has one resource only.

'The Cavalry capturing the city of *Feng Huang*' (走馬捎帶鳳凰城.). A T'ang Dynasty general, *Hsueh Jên Kuei* (薛仁貴), was sent to 'tranquillize' Corea. The 'Phoenix City' was near the borders of that country, and a place of great strategic value. He saw its importance, and captured it, although he had no explicit instructions.\* The saying is used of those who, under pressure of circumstances, exceed their orders.

'Like *Lo Ch'en*—short-lived' (屬羅成的, 竟作短命鬼的事.). A man of the T'ang Dynasty, who became a warrior at the age of 14, and was famous for his martial prowess, dying at 20, with a very bad reputation.

'On the fifth of the fifth moon if you do not stick up artemisia, you will hardly eat any new wheat' (端午不插艾, 難吃新小麥.). This proverb refers to an incident in the career of *Huang Ch'ao* (黃巢), who was a native of Shantung, and who lived at the close of the T'ang Dynasty. He attained the distinguished rank of Senior Wrangler of the Empire, and on that day, according to custom, was admitted into the interior of the Imperial Palace, where the beautiful women caught sight of him and ridiculed his ugly countenance. The Emperor in anger degraded him from his newly acquired honors, whereupon *Huang Ch'ao* returned in shame and wrath to his native province, where he collected troops and horses, and instituted a most formidable rebellion. (See Mayers'

\* The proverb is probably an exemplification of the 'false facts,' which are said to be more numerous than false theories. It does not appear that there was any such city as *Feng Huang Ch'eng* at the date given, but a somewhat similar circumstance relating to another city far distant, may have led to the confusion. The ponderousness and general inaccessibility of authentic Chinese Histories, compels the vast mass of the population who wish to know anything of the Past, to be content with knowledge which is second-hand and often worthless. Many books of Light Literature (閑書) make no pretense of confining themselves to facts. Thus, in regard to this same attack on Corea, another proverbial allusion: 'Deceiving the Son of Heaven in crossing the Sea' (竟作瞞天過海的事.), where the story is, that the T'ang Emperor (唐太宗) who really went by land—was afraid of the voyage across the Gulf of Peichihli to Corea, so his Ministers had a vessel made so huge that when he was once on board he was not aware that he had gone to sea at all!

*Manual*, No. 213). It was his habit to kill almost every human being whom he came across, and each several murder was entered upon a regular account-book kept for the purpose, the obvious intention being to revenge himself upon the Emperor by depriving him of as many as possible of his subjects.

The terrific nature of this wholesale slaughter, is inferable from the saying: '*Huang Ch'ao* slew eight millions of people; where among them all did they reckon *you*?' (黃巢殺人八百萬。那裏數的著你。). This is said to one who is so insufferably conceited as to suppose himself a person of great consequence, when he is in fact despised by all. The implication is that *Huang Ch'ao*, who took everyone, would not have reckoned *you*, *you* are therefore not a man at all, but a beast!

On one of his devastating raids through his native province, the inhabitants were fleeing in terror, when *Huang Ch'ao* overtook a woman leading a little child, and carrying on her back a much larger one. As the soldiers rapidly gained upon her, she hastened on with the larger one, leaving behind the smaller one weeping bitterly and calling for his mother. At this point *Huang Ch'ao* came up. Curious to know the explanation of the woman's singular conduct, he ordered the child to be brought to the mother, who was made to kneel in front of the general's horse. "The Ancients," said the great commander to her, "had a saying: 'All parents love their offspring' (天下父母愛小的), but how is it that you care nothing for yours?" To this the mother replied with sobs, that while the small child was her own, the larger one was her husband's nephew, who, having no father and mother of his own, had grown up with her. Had she omitted to care for him in this dire emergency, she should never have been able to look Heaven in the face\* (難見上天).

At this reply *Huang Ch'ao* was much pleased, declaring her a truly good woman (有義氣的婦人). He then plucked a bunch of artemisia (艾) and gave to her, with the injunction to insert it over her door, and to enjoin all her relatives to do the same. He thereupon ordered all his soldiers rigorously to respect this sign, and on no account to enter dwellings so protected. After giving her a handsome present of money, and enjoining her to remain quietly at home, and fear nothing, he dismissed the woman. When

\* Stories similar to this, are related of other Chinese heroes and heroines.



next the order to murder and devastate was given, the soldiers spent three days in the quest of victims, but found not one, for every door was protected by the stalks of the *ai*. Upon the return of the troops to headquarters, this circumstance was reported to *Huang Ch'ao*, who was always eager to swell the total number of the slain. On hearing the report, he sent for the woman and inquired if she meant to say that everyone in that entire region was related to her. To this the woman replied *Ai is Ai* (艾者愛也), i.e., this people all condemned to death have obtained pity (*lien ai* 憐愛) of you, and of this the *ai* plant is the visible sign. *Huang Ch'ao*, much gratified at the compliment, went his way.

The celebration of the Chinese Passover is still continued on the anniversary of the day when this occurrence took place which chanced to be the same as the Dragon-Boat Festival in honor of the death of *Ch'ü Yüan* (屈原) the 5th of the 5th moon. On this day the *ai* plant may be seen thrust over the doors of even the smallest domiciles. Only a very small fraction of the common people seem to have any idea why this usage obtains, yet that they have a dim notion that it relates to something of urgent importance is testified to by the saying current in some districts:—

'On the fifth of the fifth month stick in *ai*,  
Or you'll be a dirt-clump when you die.'

五月五日不插艾。死了變成哈喇塊。

'*Han* the Sea, and *Su* the Tide; the mounted horseman can afford to wait for them' (韓海蘇潮，騎馬可待。). This by no means self-explanatory expression, refers to two distinguished statesmen in Chinese history—*Han Ch'ang Li* (韓昌黎) or *Han Yü* (韓愈) of the T'ang Dynasty, (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 158), and *Su Tung P'o* (蘇東坡) of the Sung Dynasty, (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 623). Both of these great scholars and poets could compose with unrivalled rapidity. The first was endowed with abilities vast as the Ocean, while the capacities of the other were inexhaustible as the rolling Tide—hence their respective titles. They could dash off despatches so fast that a mounted courier might wait for them, and yet not be hindered. The expression is used in compliment of great abilities united to celerity of execution.

[It must be painfully apparent to every person who has dealings with Chinese Officials, that Oceanic *Han* and Tidal *Su* are both dead now, and that they have left no descendants whatever. There



are few greater contrasts between Oriental and Occidental civilization, than the manner in which thoughts are committed to writing. Should a sudden emergency arise requiring the notation of characters while he is away from home, a Chinese is generally a monument of helplessness. Fountain-pens, or even lead pencils, he has none, nor any substitute. The 'four precious articles'—paper, pen, ink, and a stone-slab—belong in a 'literary apartment' (文房四寶), and no one can carry them about with him, yet without them he cannot make a mark.\*

But let us suppose the individual planted in his 'literary apartment,' and observe the manner in which he wrestles with his exigency. Having collected his 'four treasures' he begins to compose—no, not yet, for beside the four, there is a fifth, without which the others are as useless as the trilobites—to wit, water. A receptacle must be found, water brought, a portion of the slab inundated, and then the writer is prepared—to get ready to begin. The ink must first be carefully triturated. (Imagine a housekeeper who is obliged to keep her guests waiting for dinner while she sends

\* This helplessness of the traveller is brought out in a somewhat pathetic verse, written by *Ch'in Sên* (岑參), an official of the T'ang Dynasty, who for some offense had been sent into the extreme west of the empire. On his journey, he meets a company on government service bound for the Capital (*Ch'ang An* 長安), and wishes to send a letter but is unable. Here are the lines:—

逢入京使。  
故園東望路漫漫。雙袖龍鍾淚不乾。  
馬上相逢無紙筆。憑君傳語報平安。

#### ON MEETING OFFICERS GOING TO THE CAPITAL.

"On the great highway looking back to the east, far far from his native place,

With his sleeves an old man wiped the tears as they trickled down his face;

Imperial messengers there he meets—a party of cavalrymen,

'A letter I'd send,' the old man cries, 'but paper I lack, and a pen.'

[Of course he did, and nearly all Chinese have continued to lack them, from the T'ang Dynasty down to date. If the old gentleman had told the whole truth, he would have stated that he also lacked, as mentioned above, the block of ink, and the ink-slab, but he could not conveniently put all *that* into the last half of one line, and brackets did not perhaps occur to him.] Finding he could not write a letter, he remarked: "Well, Gentlemen, I shall have to trouble you to take a verbal message, and say that I am contented and happy." [This was not true, or else what was he crying about when they met? The message, however, was never delivered, or if it was, only in a very different shape from that in which it was sent—or else the T'ang Dynasty people were much happier in the execution of such commissions than those of their descendants who are now alive.]

a bag of grain to the mill to be ground !) A foreign pen is thrust into its ink, as a bayonet stabs a foe, but not so a Chinese hair pencil, the delicate tip whereof, even with the most careful treatment, is perpetually coming to grief. It must be moistened by a dexterous manipulation, inducing a gentle and uniform capillary attraction of the ink. This successfully achieved, the writing begins. The matter of the communication itself, may be well or ill expressed, but its composition, notation, and dispatch has consumed time enough for the same operation to be performed by an Anglo-Saxon ten times over. In Western lands, a business man (whatever his education) seldom finds any difficulty either in understanding the business communications which he receives, or in making himself understood by others.\* Time is money. But in China time is not money, for everybody has abundance of time, while very few indeed have any money. The celerity with which a foreigner will dispatch a message, and get through a great amount of important business, is naturally a perpetual mystery and marvel to the Chinese. Hence it is not strange that a pair of exceptional characters, who were swift composers, rapid writers, and urgent executors of business, and who never kept anyone waiting, should stand out in Chinese history in as conspicuous relief as the Great Pyramid and the Sphinx upon the sandy plains of Egypt. No wonder, too, that they were denominated the Sea, and the Tide.]

#### SAYINGS RELATING TO THE SUNG DYNASTY.

'The insect can fly but ten paces, but let him attach himself to the tail of a noble steed, and he may go a thousand miles' (蠅飛不過十步。附驥尾則千里。). This saying is credited to *Chao Ku'ang Yin* (趙匡胤), the founder of the Sung dynasty, who is a conspicuous character in Chinese history, and who has given his name to the *Chao Wang* (趙王) River in Shantung. The expression is used in self-depreciation, and has become a synonym for sycophancy—to attach oneself to a great man's train.

'Shall I suffer another man to sleep under my bed?' (臥榻之下、豈容他人酣睡乎。). This is another utterance of the

\* Witness, for example, the letter written by an illiterate ship-captain, who during the existence of a war in South America, had been dispatched with a cargo to a port in Peru. The owners received, in due time, to their intense mystification, the following laconic epistle: "Own to the blockhead the vig is spilt." Yet when deciphered, this proved to be a report of model lucidity and comprehensiveness: 'Owing to the blockade, the voyage is spoilt.' No Chinese could have indited such a message.



first Emperor of the Sung dynasty. The words are said to have been quoted by the Emperor *Tao Kuang*, in conversation with one of his ministers in regard to the demands of the British government, at the time of the war of 1842.

'Like the goddess of child-bearing—two faced' (屬送生娘娘的兩臉). This was a concubine of an Emperor of the Sung Dynasty. Her name was *Chu* (珠) and her surname *K'ou* (寇). The principal Empress died without a child, and the Emperor promised the Eastern and Western Empresses, who were perpetually wrangling for the precedence, that whichever first bore a son, should enjoy the honor of being mother to the heir-apparent. A son was first born to the Eastern Empress, but her rival, having bribed the midwife, contrived, when the mother was unconscious, to remove the young child, and to introduce in its place a little fox that had just been skinned. The Emperor was then memorialized on the subject of the monstrosity which had been produced, which resulted in the banishment and degradation of the Eastern Empress. The infant was wrapped up, and given to *K'ou Chu* to be thrown into the river. She, being unwilling to commit such a cruelty, saved the child, which, becoming known to the Western Empress, she had *K'ou Chu* beaten to death. Upon the decease of the Emperor (眞宗) the young prince succeeded to the throne, and promoted his benefactress to the rank of goddess. Her image in the temples is furnished with a mask, supposed to represent her appearance at the time of her warder. The proverb is used of sudden change of front, as for example, a very angry man restored to good humor at the prospect of gain.

'The goddess of child-bearing throwing down her sack—bad for the babies' (送生娘娘摔褡子。毀孩子). Used in banter toward one on the loss of capital, or on occasion of any disaster.

'*Meng Liang* rubbing his gourd—the fire comes!'

'*Meng Liang's* gourd—great fire!' (孟良摸葫蘆火兒來了).

These sayings refer to a general of the Sung Dynasty, who was much addicted to causing conflagrations. Metaphorically, of one's temper, i.e., he is growing very angry (心頭火起).

'The unselfish man with the Iron Face—that was *Pao Cheng*' (鐵面無私的人。包拯). This was a statesman of the Sung Dynasty (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 539) who never smiled in his life. He was upright and disinterested, but so immobile of countenance



that he gained the soubriquet of the Iron Face, which has become a synonym for unselfishness.

'So handsome as to have fruit thrown to him, enough to fill his chariot' (美如擲果盈車). This refers to *P'an An* (潘安) of the Sung Dynasty, the most beautiful youth known to Chinese history or legend. Whenever this Apollo appeared upon the streets in his carriage, the women gazed upon him with admiration, and threw pears, peaches and other fruits, so that his cart was filled with them. The expression is used in praise of masculine beauty.

'Like *Sung Chiang*—pretended humanity and justice' (屬宋江的假仁義). This man was a clerk in a *Yamên*, when he committed a murder for which he was obliged to fly. He set up as a Chinese Robinhood in the recesses of the inaccessible *Liang Shan Po* (梁山泊), where he collected around him six and thirty adventurers, many of whom are famous as generals. Each man had three names (on the Chinese plan) and it occurred to some one to feign that each of these names represented a different man, hence *Sung Chiang's* robbers are often spoken of as the 108. This simple recipe may perhaps be the means by which some of the armies known to Chinese history have been enumerated. These tales are popularized in a book called *Shui Hu* (水滸傳).

'*Lü Meng Cheng's* cap—the matrix of poverty' (呂蒙正的帽子窮胎). This was a councillor, in the Sung Dynasty, who in early youth was extremely poor. When he afterwards became an official, he kept his ragged cap, to remind him of his antecedents. Hence, employed of one who exhibits the effects of former poverty.

'*Lü Meng Cheng* coming to meals at the temple—always late' (呂蒙正趕齋來晚了). Although obliged to beg for a living, a priest, foreseeing his brilliant future, found a place for him in his temple. According to temple usages, meals are served at the sound of a bell (鐘響喫飯). The little priest who did the cooking, jealous of a stranger thus introduced, purposely neglected to sound the bell until the meal was nearly over. *Lü Meng Cheng*—who was roaming about—was therefore invariably late. Metaphor of anyone or anything behind time. Variations of this legend are also current.

'Like *Tou* of *Yên Shan*, who distributed his wealth justly' (屬實燕山的仗義疎財). This man lived in the early days of the Sung Dynasty, at a place called *Yu chou* (幽州), the modern

*Pei Tung chou*, near Peking (通州), which subsequently belonged to the state of *Yen*, whence he acquired his appellation "*Tou of Yen*." Although not rich, he was just and generous. He figures as a kind of Chinese Abraham, from the fact that he ruled his household in an ideal manner, and that posterity was granted to him when the hope of such a blessing had passed away. When he and his wife had reached the age of 56, twin sons were born, and by the time they were 65 they had five sons, all of whom became great officers of state. The regulations of his house were as strict as those of the Imperial Palace itself, and even after his sons had become great and famous, their father kept his paternal eye upon them, for he and his wife lived to the age of 130! He has been immortalized in the early lines of the Trimetrical Classic (寶燕山, 有義方, 教五子, 名俱揚.) 'Just was the life of *Tou of Yen*; five sons he taught, all famous men.'

'A line on the ground—friendship broken' (割地絕了交). This saying refers to a story related of *Yüeh Fei* (岳飛) of the Sung Dynasty. See Mayers' *Manual*, No. 928. In early life he was poor, having been driven from his home by devastating floods. He afterwards studied military science, and taught ten pupils bound to him by an oath of brotherhood. When the whole region in which he lived was reduced to destitution by famine, his ten pupils came to the abode of *Yüeh Fei* with their horses, to pay him a visit until times should mend. *Yüeh Fei* entertained them as well as he could, though with such evident difficulty, that his ten pupils deliberated how to assist him. Instead of paying for their board (at famine rates) up to date, and betaking themselves with their horses elsewhere, they decided to black their faces and turn highway robbers. This intention was carried into effect by the plunder of a company of merchants, the avails of whose goods were presented to *Yüeh Fei* with the statement that the ten had all been to their original homes and sold their possessions.

Now *Yüeh Fei* was a man of great sagacity, whose experience of life had probably taught him that persons who would come to live upon a 'sworn-brother,' in a year of famine, bringing their horses with them, would be quite capable of stealing, and of lying about it afterwards. He saw through their tale, challenged them with its falsity, and wrung from them a full confession. He then made a short speech, worthy of a Sunday School Superintendent, on the



impropriety and folly of breaking the laws of the land, and concluded by drawing a line on the ground with his spear, intimating that his friendship with them was terminated. This done, he mounted his horse, and rode away weeping, without even settling the account of his late boarders.

#### SAYINGS RELATING TO THE MING DYNASTY.

'(The escape of) *Ch'en Yu Liang* in plain sight (of his enemy)' (眼睜睜的陳友諒). This sententious utterance refers to an occasion when *Ch'en Yu Liang* fought with *Chu Yüan Chang* (朱元璋), otherwise known as *Hung Wu* (洪武), the celebrated founder of the Ming Dynasty. The latter is said to have allowed him to escape when defeated, although he saw him fleeing. Yet he was on another occasion overtaken and slain. See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 105. Used of lost opportunity.

'Begging with a silver bowl' (拿著銀碗討飯吃). This refers to the story of *Yen Sung* (嚴嵩), a wicked minister of the Ming Dynasty, who was guilty of extortion and every crime. The Emperor *Chia Ching* (嘉靖) wished to punish him severely, but as from ancient times no sword has ever been forged with which to kill officers of such high rank, he could not put him to death. He hit upon the expedient, however, of giving him a silver bowl, commanding him to go about among the people and beg food in this vessel, without which no one was allowed to give him anything. But the people, to whom he was odious, refused to give him anything either with it or without it, for the Emperor's plain meaning was perfectly understood, and even had any been willing to assist him, they dared not. Thus the wicked minister starved, even while owning a silver bowl, for no one would venture to purchase it. The expression is used of things, which though inherently valuable, cannot be turned to any account.

'Like *Tu Tzu Heng*—plotting within with those without' (屬杜子衡的裏勾外連). A man who at the fall of the Ming Dynasty was in league with the rebel *Li Tzu Ch'eng* (李自成), who entered Peking. Used in allusion to traitors, etc.

'*Chou Yü Chi* celebrating his mother's birthday—the family extinguished, its members perish' (周遇吉上壽。家敗人亡). This was a general whose home was at Tientsin, and who heard on his mother's birthday, of the entrance to Peking of the rebel *Li Tzu*



*Ch'eng* just mentioned. On receipt of the intelligence his mother urged him to go to the aid of the Emperor, which his filial care for his aged parent made him unwilling to do. After he had gone, his mother locked herself and all the family into the house, and had it set on fire, that her son might serve his country with a single heart. He was killed in battle, and his mother is regarded as a model of the Virtues!

"When half the empire of the Ming Dynasty has been lost, still to utter the *yu* character" (大明的江山去了一半, 仍說有字). This saying refers to the troubled days of the Emperor *Ch'ung Chen* (崇禎) when the Ming Dynasty was drawing to its close. The rebel *Li Tzu Ch'eng* (李自成) had taken so many cities, and so much territory, that the Emperor was in despair, and continually burned incense and resorted to divination, to ascertain the will of Heaven in regard to the domain of the Mings, whether it was to be divided or not. Heaven responded by giving him the *Yu* 有 character, whereupon the Emperor was greatly pleased. One Minister, however, fell to weeping upon hearing this announcement. The Emperor, in surprise, inquired the reason, and was reminded, in reply, that the characters *Ta Ming* 大明, "Great Ming Dynasty," when reduced more than half, formed the *Yu* character [the first two strokes of the *ta* character 𠂇 and the *yuieh* 月 of the following character, forming together the *Yu* 有 character]. Here was, therefore, reason to fear that the rebels had already seized more than half of the Empire. The subsequent suicide of this Emperor, by hanging, when the rebels reached the gates of Peking, showed that this was a true estimate of the political condition of the Empire.

"There is only one great stroke of luck in the world, and that was bought up by *Wang Hua Erh*" (世上只有一个便宜, 被王花兒買去了). It is popularly believed that because the Emperor *Cheng Tê* (正德 the eleventh of the Ming Dynasty) had no son, he was accustomed to make secret excursions, in disguise, among the people, on the plan of the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, with a view to finding some perfectly filial son whom he could adopt. Roaming about in the garb of a beggar clad in straw, he offered to sell himself, declaring that if any orphan would purchase him for a father, he would exact no purchase money. Everyone ridiculed this absurd proposal, but a poor and fatherless youth

named *Wang Hua* actually came forward, and took the beggar for his father. The latter tested *Wang Hua's* constancy to his newly-formed filial relationship, by an hundred different experiments, but *Wang Hua* proved adequate to them all. At last the Emperor took his treasure to the palace, and made him his successor on the throne, when he became known in history as *Chia Ching* (嘉靖).

'The *Wên* character when analyzed, discloses a Prince on this side and on that' (問字拆開, 是左右爲君). The Emperor *Cheng Tê*, as mentioned above, had no son. When dangerously ill he cast about, to think who of all his numerous nephews would do for the throne, but he could fix upon no one of them who was at all suitable, for those who were not stupid were vicious. At length, however, he recollected a youth whose connection with the imperial family was extremely distant, whose father held office in *Ssu Ch'uan*. This lad was only eighteen years of age, and had accompanied his father the preceding year upon a visit to court, where he attracted the favorable notice of the Emperor, who now conceived the idea of sending for him with a view to make him his successor. His majesty, not unnaturally, feared that should this purpose become known, the nearer members of the imperial family would contrive some way to put the lad out of the way, before he could reach Peking at all. *Cheng Tê* therefore resorted to craft. He sent a message to the young man's father, announcing that his son, upon his last year's visit to Peking, had been found to be guilty of certain disrespectful behavior to his own father, and ordering the latter to send his son to the Capital, to receive some admonition from the Emperor. Neither the lad nor his father could form the least idea what this strange order signified, no thought of the Emperor's real purpose having entered their minds. On parting with his parents to be conveyed by 'flying carts' to the court, the youth wept, and proceeded upon his solitary journey filled with sad forebodings. At an inn upon the route where the animals were fed, a person who tells fortunes by the analysis of characters (測字的先生) happened to attract the young man's notice. He immediately resolved to try his fortune, and wrote the character meaning 'to ask' (*wên* 問) which he presented to the fortune-teller to be interpreted, inquiring what should be the outcome of this sudden summons to Peking—whether auspicious or otherwise. The skillful analyser of characters at once pronounced the omens most



favorable, on the ground that the character (*wén* 問) consisted of two characters for Prince (*chün* 君) one on each side [君、臣、問]. Although the young traveller was wholly unprepared to credit such a divination as this, he was easily persuaded to promise that when he became a Prince, he would send for the fortune-teller to be his Minister. After the young man actually became Emperor (taking the style of *Chia Ching* 嘉靖), this promise was redeemed, and the diviner, whose name was *Yen Sung* (嚴嵩) became a most important Minister, but so bad a one that his Imperial Master was obliged to starve him to death by compelling him to beg with a silver bowl; as related in a preceding paragraph.

These sayings in regard to the origin of a famous Ming Emperor, with their various inconsistencies and absurdities, furnish a text for repeating and emphasizing some observations which have already been either explicitly made, or implicitly suggested. The great foes to correct historical knowledge among the common people in China, in addition to the ever-present 'struggle for existence' which frequently renders any kind or degree of education an utter impossibility, may be said to be three.

First, the almost infinite voluminousness of such historical works as pretend to fulness, as well as the barren meagerness of the smaller compendiums. Their vast extent places the standard works of reference quite beyond the means of any but the comparatively rich. Imagine a state of society, where in a county (Hsien District) inhabited by thousands of scholars, there is *known to be only one History* (史紀), a work in seventy cases (*t'ao*), consisting probably of four hundred or five hundred volumes, sufficient in bulk for one or two cart-loads, and no part of this historical wilderness accessible to outsiders on any terms whatever!

No wonder the Chinese proverb runs: 'If one wishes to be acquainted with the Past and the Present, he must read Five Cart-loads of books' (要知古今事須看五車書.). A work corresponding to the "Child's History of England," in which every important event is accurately noted in its order, the connection between events clearly shown, and the whole presented in an interesting, compendious and attractive manner, would be of the greatest possible assistance in contributing to a popularization of historical knowledge in China. Aids of this kind, however, so far as appears, are absolutely lacking.



Another enemy to popular historical knowledge is the little books so often cited, called Light Literature (閑書), frequently based upon some historical or semi-historical occurrence, in which, however, all but the merest outlines are not seldom wholly unhistorical. The plots are woven with exclusive reference to making an exciting narrative. Thus a circumstance which in a standard epitome of history (綱鑑) would perhaps be summarily dismissed in two lines, may be amplified in Light Literature into an entertaining volume. A popular story of this sort has an immortality of its own, and will penetrate in every direction, where true history can never reach.

The other enemy of real historical knowledge is two-faced—the omnipresent Theater, and the all-pervasive Story-teller. The Chinese are indeed the most patient of auditors, but not even a Chinese audience could be expected to listen with interest to the dullness of an ordinary Chinese history. Both the Theatrical representation, and the narrative of the Story-teller, are free and unfettered. They can start anywhere and go everywhere, can make everything out of nothing, and like skillful conjurers, can bring the most astonishing things out of a place which is visibly empty—to-wit, their mouths.

The consequence of these conditions is, that accurate information on historical subjects is by no means so easily obtained in China as might be expected from the number (absolutely great though always relatively small) of reading men or 'scholars' whom it is practicable to consult. The ordinary school-master may be said to be a kind of a mean between the more accomplished scholars above them, and the positively or comparatively uneducated masses below them. Yet an ordinary school-master, taken at random, might not perhaps be able to give *exact* information, say in regard to the era of the Contending Kingdoms. The "Memorials of the Contending Kingdoms" (戰國志) he has, not improbably, read, but that was a long time ago. With the "Spring and Autumn Annals" of Confucius he may be familiar, although this is by no means certain, as that work is said of late years to be much neglected. The Contending States were about twenty in number, and in reading the Annals of twenty different states, it is difficult even for the memory of a Chinese teacher to remember at all times which is which.

Besides this the knowledge of ancient geography which most Chinese possess is almost certain to be confused and imperfect. A graduate of Cambridge University, whose time had been chiefly given to mathematics, might not pass a good examination upon the details of the Saxon Heptarchy, although the Saxon Heptarchy is from five hundred to a thousand years nearer to our times than is the epoch of the Contending Kingdoms. Yet whatever his knowledge, or ignorance, we cannot conceive that the Cambridge man's acquaintance with the History of England should have been derived partly from tales which he had heard his grandfather repeat, as they had been told by *his* grandfather, partly from recollections of historical plays, and the rest from the perusal of such productions as Jane Porter's "Highland Chiefs," or Louisa Mühlochs' "Court of Henry the VIII." Yet instances to which this supposititious case would form no very distant analogue, might be easily cited in China. The Chinese are at once the most learned and the most ignorant people in history.

#### SAYINGS RELATING TO THE CH'ING DYNASTY.

'Like sitting on a cushion of needles—like nettles in one's back' (如坐針氈、背生芒刺). This refers to a notorious robber and pirate at the beginning of the present dynasty, named *Chou Yin Lung* (周隱龍), who abandoned his evil ways, and was rewarded with the post of captain of the guard. In consequence of his merits in this capacity, he was promoted to be a general. His associates in office all despised him on account of his antecedents, and this circumstance, together with his unfamiliarity with the ceremonial of office, soon led him to petition the Emperor for leave to give up his post and retire to his native village. The expression is used to indicate that one is ill at ease, in consequence of incongruity between his own character and his surroundings.

'There are only two busy people in the world' (天下只有兩人忙). It is one of the many incidents related of the Emperor *Ch'ien Lung*, that he was once walking on the city wall of Peking, when looking down upon the multitudes pouring through one of the principal gates, the *Ch'ien Men* (前門), he asked his Prime Minister *Ho Shen* (和珅) how many persons passed in and out through the *Ch'ien Men* in one day, (前門一天出入有多少人). *Ho Shen* replied, Two. When the Emperor inquired how that could be, he



explained that one is named Fame (名) and the other Gain (利). The saying is used to indicate that these furnish the sole underlying motives which really influence human conduct.

SAYINGS WITH GENERAL REFERENCE TO HISTORIC OR  
SEMI-HISTORIC CHARACTERS.

Many sayings belonging to this class are merely suggested by the well known characteristics of some individual, and have no relation to any particular incident. '*Meng Chiang and Liu Hai travelling together—the Weeping accompanies the Laughing*' (孟姜跟着劉海走。哭的陪笑的。). *Meng Chiang* was a woman of very ancient times, who was an expert weeper. *Liu Hai*, a reputed Chinese Democritus, was noted for his laughter. These characters, supposed to have lived centuries apart, are linked together to denote the union of smiles and tears.

'*Chou's dog barking at Yao—each follows his own master*' (紂犬吠堯,各爲其主。). *Chou* was the celebrated tyrant whose crimes put an end to the Shang (or Yin) dynasty, B.C. 1123; while *Yao* (who died much more than a millennium previously) "stands at the dawn of Chinese history as a model of all wisdom and sovereign virtue."

'*Fishes dropping to the bottom of the river; Wild Geese alighting on the ground; The Moon obscured; Flowers put to shame*' (沉魚,落雁。閉月,羞花。). These expressions embody allusions to several celebrated Beauties in Chinese history or legend. *Wu Tzu Hsü* (伍子胥) of the kingdom of *Ch'u* (楚) (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 879) in his flight to the state of *Wu* (吳) is said to have seen a beautiful woman by the river-side washing clothes. The fish, illuminated by the light of her resplendent countenance were dazzled, and sank to the bottom. The same story is told in regard to *Hsi Shih* (西施), the famous beauty of the *Yüeh* (越) state. See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 571.

The legend of the Wild Geese is one of the tales connected with the name of *Chao Chün* (昭君). See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 45. After she had been taken captive by the Northern Barbarians (匈奴) she implored a Wild Goose to take a letter to the Emperor *Han Wu Ti* (漢武帝), which she tied to the foot of the bird, by whom it was faithfully delivered in the Emperor's Palace. This letter, declaring the inflexible resolution of his favorite concubine to put



an end to her life, and thanking the Emperor for his kindness to her, so affected him that he soon afterwards died of grief!

It was *Ts'ui Ying* (崔鶯) who, in a contest with the Moon, forced that luminary to pale its ineffectual rays and hide its face. See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 792.

The Beauties who in their walks in the gardens caused the flowers to lose their color, were *Tiao Ch'an* (貂蟬) (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 669) and *Yang Kuei Fei* (楊貴妃), the concubine of *Ming Huang* (明皇) of the T'ang Dynasty. See *Mayers' Manual*, No. 887.

'*Chang Fei* selling hedge-hogs—a mighty man whose wares wound the hands' (張飛賣獾蜋, 人強貨扎手). *Chang Fei*—the companion of *Liu Pei* and *Kuan Yü*—already referred to—was wealthy, and far above the need of peddling porcupines for a living. His well known personal prowess, and the danger of offending him, have given rise to this saying. It is applicable, for instance, to a magistrate of a dangerous character whose underlings it is not safe to provoke.

'*Chang Fei* catching a mole—the big eye staring at the little eye' (張飛拿倉官, 大眼兒睜小眼兒). *Chang Fei* is said to have had large eyes—those of a mole are small. This is applied to two persons, both of whom are at their wits' end because their plans have miscarried, and they have nothing left but to stare at each other.

'Speak of *Ts'ao Ts'ao* and he appears' (說曹操, 曹操就到). The famous general who overthrew the Han Dynasty is "the most prominent character in the great drama of history forming the epoch known as that of the Three Kingdoms." Such was his strategical ability that it was as if one had but to mention his name and lo! he appeared, as if by a descent from heaven.

'*Ts'ao Ts'ao* buying a horse wishes to see its mother' (曹操買馬, 要看母子). It is probable that this saying arose by mistake from another of similar sound: 'Buying a horse at the manger—look at its mother' (槽頭買馬, 要看母子), i.e., the demerits of children seen in their parents.

'Eating the food of *Wang Mang*, but entering the kingdom of *Liu Hsiu*' (吃王莽的飯, 走劉秀的國). *Wang Mang* belonged to the Western Han, and *Liu Hsiu* to the Eastern Han. (See *Mayers' Manual*, Nos. 418 and 804). Many who received

emoluments from the usurper *Wang Mang* were secretly in the interest of *Liu Hsiu*, by whom the government was at length seized. Used of double dealing.

'Let a dog bite *Fan Tan* and no one cares; but if a scorpion sting *Shih Oh'ung* sympathizers come in such crowds as to break down the doors' (狗咬范丹無人問。蠍蜇石崇擠破門.). *Fan Tan* was a scholar at the time of the Contending Kingdoms, ideally poor, blessed with a great number of children, who all rose to distinction in high office. *Shih Oh'ung*—the Chinese Croesus—of the Han Dynasty, a merchant whose money-making capacities are the envy of thousands. Many wonderful tales are related of his inexhaustible wealth, as that in rivalry with a petty potentate he covered the streets for forty *li* with brocade, beating his rival by ten *li*; that he gave as a present a coral tree seven ells high (the King being only able to produce one three ells high); and that he bought a beautiful girl for "thirty-six measures of fine pearls," a bargain which turned out badly, as the Viceroy threw *Shih Oh'ung* into prison to get this maiden, where he died. Hence the proverb: 'Where now is the wealth and prestige of *Shih Oh'ung*? But *Fan Tan* having such sons could not be called poor' (石崇豪富今何在。范丹有子不爲貧.). In the following verse, the opposite fortunes of *Fan Tan* and *Shih Oh'ung* are contrasted, as well as those of several other individuals, all of whom have been already mentioned, except *P'eng Tsu* (彭祖) (see *Mayers' Manual*, No. 561), a mythical personage whose life was laid out on the antediluvian plan, and who is fabled to have lived eight hundred years:—

'*Kan Lo* was young when up he sprung an Officer high of State,  
But the evil star of old *Tzu Ya* till eighty made him wait.  
*P'eng Tsu* appears eight hundred years before he fades from view,  
*Yen Hui*'s career was finished here at the age of thirty-two.  
Now *Fan Tan* he was horribly poor, but *Shih Oh'ung* rich was he,  
The Diagrams Eight interpret Fate according to Heaven's decree.'

甘羅發早子牙遲。彭祖顏回壽不齊。  
范丹貧窮石崇富。八字生來各有時。

'Hearing with her eyebrows, and speaking with her eyes; that was *Lü Chu*' (眉聽、目語、是緣珠.). This was the concubine of *Shih Oh'ung* (石崇) and she was the one who was the means of his ruin. 'The Princee envied *Shih Oh'ung* the possession of a concubine



at once so beautiful and so wise, and easily contrived a way to obtain her by the imprisonment of her master.

The tendency in Chinese Proverbs to cluster, by a kind of crystallization, about a particular character, admits of numerous illustrations. The Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1278) produced many famous men and great scholars, like *Chu Hsi* (朱熹), the annotator of the Classics and historian, whose name is almost as familiar to the Chinese in every succeeding age as those of Confucius and Mencius, whose works he interpreted.

It is not, however, the name of *Chu fu tzu*, among men of his general era, which is most often heard in popular speech (although some of his reputed household words have become proverbial), but that of another individual who has become a national by-word and laughing stock. *Chu fu tzu* is known principally to those who can read, but there is scarcely any one, whether he can read or not, who has not heard of *Wu Ta Lang* (武大郎). This individual was a dwarf. His wife was named *P'an Chin Lien* (潘金蓮), and is remembered for her intrigues with one *Hsi Mên Ch'ing* (西門慶), intrigues to which her husband was unable to put a stop. It is said that this precious couple finally put an end to *Wu Ta Lang*, by compelling him to take a drug in which poison was infused, and which he dared not refuse, although aware of their purpose. Hence the proverb—employed in reference to one who is driven to the wall—' *Wu Ta Lang's* dose of poison—sure to die if he takes it, and sure to die if he does not,' (武大郎服毒。吃也死。不吃也是死。)

*Wu Ta Lang* had an elder brother known as *Wu Sung* (武松), who was a general under *Sung Chiang* (宋江), already mentioned, and a man of great prowess. He was so fond of wine that his name has become proverbial. To revenge the murder of his brother, he killed his brother's wife and her paramour *Hsi Mên Ch'ing*. In penalty for this offense he was banished. The commander of the district, to which *Wu Sung* was exiled, was named *Shih*. He had a son known as *Shih En* (施恩), who taking advantage of his father's military prestige, and of his own physical strength, had set up one of those little despotisms, so common in China, by which a tax is levied on every form of trade, the only equivalent for which is exemption from similar exactions by others than the particular petty tyrant who extorts them.



In an evil hour for *Shih En*, a mightier robber than himself, named *Chiang*, suddenly descended upon him, beating and wounding him and driving him from the field, diverting the revenues to himself. *Shih* bethought himself of seeking the valiant aid of *Wu Sung*, which was cheerfully given, but to *Shih's* dismay, *Wu* drank such an amount of wine as apparently to unfit him for any exploits whatever. *Wu*, however, explained, that unless he was drunk, he was of no use as a fighter, and when entirely drunk he was invincible. He then attacked *Chiang* in his head-quarters, a place called the Happy Grove, and defeated him. Hence the proverb: ' *Wu Sung's* great brawl in the Happy Grove—the slave of his wine,' 武松大鬧快活林。是酒兒支使的。—said of intoxicated persons.

*Wu Ta Lang* is now the Chinese Man-of-Ill-Fame, as his name has come to suggest all varieties of unfavorable predicates; in short he has become the ideal Mean Man (小人\*). Even a tiger, it is said, would not eat him, for he did not seem to be a man at all, 老虎不吃武大郎。沒有人的氣味。

'He goes a hawking with an owl (a bird of ill name)—the man and the bird are well matched,' 武大郎架着夜貓子。甚麼人兒甚麼雀鳥。 said contemptuously of a bad master and bad servants.

General incapacity is indicated by the observation that one is like ' *Wu Ta Lang* selling gruel—the man weak and his wares soft,' 武大郎賣面茶。人軟貨稀。

Anything which is hopelessly bad, is affirmed to be like ' *Wu Ta Lang's* toes—not a single good one among them,' 武大郎的腳指頭。一個好的沒有。

People of short stature are bantered by being likened to ' *Wu Ta Lang* turning on a gymnastic bar; when he was on the ground he could not reach the bar, and when on the bar he could not reach the ground,' 武大郎盤杠子。上下殼不着。

\* A curious aspect of popular Chinese ethics is exhibited in a saying which declares that it is better to be a really superior man—like *Chao K'uang Yin*, who founded the Sung Dynasty, even though he should commit every kind of evil, than to be like *Wu Ta Lang*, even though he strictly observed all the known proprieties, 吃喝嫖賭的趙匡胤。安分守己的武大郎。 The meaning is that the lofty spirit of the former condones his offences, while the essential meanness of the latter renders him contemptible, though his actions may be irreproachable.

'*Wu Ta Lang* becoming Emperor—no one can tell what will happen,' 武大郎坐天下。不敢保, said of one who undertakes what he cannot carry through.

General incapacity is intimated by the saying: '*Wu Ta Lang* flying a kite—he cannot make it rise,' 武大郎放風箏。出手不高。

The only favourable thing that we hear of him is that his garments were neither too long nor too short—exactly right, 武大郎的袍子不長不短。正合式兒的。 Used of anything which is well done.

When the completeness of the temples on Mount Tai is spoken of, it is a common jest to reply: 'Did you see any temple to *Wu Ta Lang*?'—a sportive intimation that any excellence, however great and undisputed (such as the variety of the Temples on T'ai Shan), is open to small and irrational criticism (such as the complaint at not finding any recognition of a departed Worthy of so much celebrity as *Wu Ta Lang*).

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## CHAPTER VI

### *Proverbs Relating to Specific Places or Districts, or to Persons or Events of Merely Local Importance.*

The boundary line between this class of sayings and the last, is not always distinct, since a person of local celebrity may become famous, and a small place may come in time to have a great name.

Local proverbs are of many varieties. Some of them refer to facts in the realm of physical geography. As, for example: 'The Yellow River is a prodigal son, the Grand Canal is an inexhaustible box of jewels to support the family,' 黃河是敗家子。運糧河是養家的聚寶盆. The Grand Canal was dug to give safe conveyance of the southern tribute rice to Peking, without fear of storms or pirates. The Yellow River, nearly useless for navigation, must be constantly kept banked in at vast expense, or it inundates whole provinces.

The Hu T'o River (滹沱河) which rises in northern Shansi, finds its way through the Tai Hang Mountains (太行山) near the city of *Cheng Ting Fu* (正定府), where it comes upon the great plain of Chihli. In the course of years it has washed down thousands of acres of sand, which spreads all over the land and buries the soil out of sight. In time the channel silts up, and at the next annual flood the waters swing off into some new course, carrying devastation in their track. This process has continued for ages, and observation on the course of the erratic stream is condensed in the saying: 'Never south of Hêng, never north of P'ing,' 南不過衡。北不過平, i.e., Heng Shui Hsien (衡水縣) and An P'ing Hsien (安平縣), cities which are an hundred miles or more apart.

Another class of sayings gives expression to some fact of local history, or to some *soi disant* prophecy, e.g., 'When the monastery of *T'an Che* is burned, the city of Peking will be inundated,' 火燒曇折寺水淹北京城. This is the prophetic dictum of somebody, referring to a celebrated temple south-west of Peking. Predictions of this sort are received by the masses with the most implicit faith.



'Fire and flood at Tientsin, but not the calamity of war.'  
 天津衛只有水火之災。沒有刀兵之苦。 This is a reputed saying of *Liu Po Wén* (劉伯溫), one of the celebrated adherents of *Hung Wu* (洪武), who founded the Ming Dynasty. He is generally regarded as a Prophet, but whether he ever said any of the remarkable things attributed to him, is known only to the Immortals. It is a singular circumstance that if the observation was in reality a prediction, for centuries it matched the facts. The people of Tientsin have been often in mortal peril of the horrors of war, especially when the T'ai P'ing rebels marched against Peking, on which occasion they made a permanent (and unaccountable) halt at *Ching Hai Hsien* (靜海縣), 25 miles south of Tientsin, and that city was saved. So likewise in 1860, when the British and French troops invaded Chihli, the fighting was done at *Pei Tang, Taku, Chang Chia Wan*, and near *Tung-chow*, while Tientsin again escaped. But the miseries resulting from the capture of the city in the summer of 1900 more than compensated for the immunity of previous years, and the 'prophecy' will be quoted no more. Fires are of great frequency. The whole region was inundated from 1871 to 1873, causing extreme misery, and the same has been the case frequently since that time.

'Three inconspicuous mountains produced a race of kings four city gates not opposite each other, account for the number of high officials,' 三山不顯出王位。四門不對出高官。 This couplet embodies the popular opinion in regard to the situation of the Capital of Shantung, which is peculiar. The mountains on the south, the remarkable spring at the south-west corner of the city, and three small hills in the vicinity, have exerted a powerful geomantic influence. The ground is saturated with water, hence the place is regarded as a kind of boat. One of the little hills referred to is called *Chüeh Shan* (楸山), "Peg Mountain," for it is this to which the boat is tied, and without which it might drift entirely away!

A third variety of local proverbs specifies some objects of interest in a city or district. Thus, e.g., a city in Chihli called *Ts'ang Chou* (滄州), was long since removed from its site (the Chinese are always carrying their cities about in this way) and replanted twelve or fifteen miles westward. The place was once famous for a pair of iron lions—still to be seen—of gigantic size.

*Tung Kuang* (東光縣), a district city on the Imperial Canal, has a large idol of iron, while *Ching Chou* (景州) not far distant, west of the Canal, boasts a pagoda, which, in that part of China, are of infrequent occurrence. These several objects are woven into proverbial jingles, thus: "The lions of *Ts'ang Chou*, the *Ching Chou* pagoda, the great iron *P'u Sa* of *Tung Kuang Hsien*," 滄州獅子、景州塔、東光縣鐵菩薩。

Rhymes of this kind are probably universal throughout the empire. They are collected into little pamphlets called "Visits to the Cities of All Creation," 走遍天下州, and other similar titles (like other cheaply printed books full of wrong characters), a perusal of which forms the only substitute which most persons can command for our primary geographies.

The peculiarities of a city are often made up into a little bundle of three, and called its treasures, in imitation of the Three Precious Ones (三寶) of the Buddhists. Thus Peking has its treasures three; horses that do not kick [because the crowds are so constant that horses are not easily frightened], dogs that do not bite [because they continually see strangers], and damsels of 17 and 18 that run loose in the streets [because the Tartar fashions in this respect are totally diverse from those of the Chinese, who, like the Apostle Paul, require that the young women should be keepers at home.] 北京城, 三種寶, 馬不蹄, 狗不咬, 十七八的閨女滿街跑。

"The three specialties of *Pao Ting Fu*; iron balls, the stone melon, and the *Ch'un pu lao*" 保定府, 三種寶, 鐵毬, 列瓜, 春不老. In *Pao Ting Fu* are manufactured little iron balls which are held in the hand for a plaything, and are by some considered as a tonic. The *Lieh kua* is a stone, shaped somewhat like a gourd, built into the floor of the verandah of a shop in the western part of the city. It is supposed to be a charm capable of checking the "social evil." According to report attempts have been made to dig up this wonderful stone, but the deeper the excavation, the larger the space which the stone occupied. Arguing from these data, the "melon" has been thought by some to be the summit of a mountain, all but the tip of which is buried! The *Ch'un-pu-lao* is a plant somewhat resembling mustard, and much cultivated in this region.

Tientsin has its treasures three; the drum tower [which has a double arch, regarded by the Chinese as a master-piece of difficulty



in the architectural line, the plan of which, according to tradition, was revealed to the builder in a dream], the forts [of which there were originally seven, built in the Ming Dynasty by *Yung Lo* and now entirely demolished], and the bell-tower [a structure of no pretensions whatever, and probably only mentioned in this connection because the last character (often pronounced *kao*) happened to rhyme with *p'ao*], 天津衛, 三種寶, 鼓樓, 炮台, 玲瓏閣.

'The four peculiarities of *Chi Nan Fu*; the Temple of the North Pole inside the north gate, the Mountain of the Thousand Buddhas outside the south gate, the grave of *Min tzu* outside the east gate, and the *Pao T'u* Spring outside the west gate,' 濟南府, 四種寶, 北門裡頭北極廟, 南門外頭千佛山, 東門外頭閔子墓, 西門外頭寶突泉. *Min tzu* was one of the disciples of Confucius. He is included among the Twenty-four Patterns of Filial Obedience, and his name has thus become familiar to every one. (See Mayer's *Manual*, No. 503.) His step-mother had two children of her own,\* and took care to see that they were warmly clad, while he was made to wear garments wadded only with reeds and rushes. Old Mr. *Min* was totally unacquainted with his son's wardrobe, but one extremely cold day he sent *Min tzu* to harness the chariot, and drive his father out. On the way *Min tzu* dropped the lines and the whip owing to his being in a chronic state of semi-congelation. His father thus came to a knowledge of his sufferings, and was so indignant that he resolved to divorce Mrs. *M.* at once. Young *Min tzu*, however, who was an ardent disciple of Jeremy Bentham in the opinion that the ruling principle of one's actions should always be "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," met his father's announcement of the impending separation, with the observation:—

'With a Mother at home, one son endures distress,  
When the Mother is gone, three sons are motherless.'

母在一子寒。母去三子單。

The effect of this behaviour of *Min tzu* was that so often found in Chinese stories. Old Mr. *Min* was led to reconsider his decision, and Mrs. *Min* was so affected that she became as fond of *Min tzu* as of her own children! Hence the common proverb: 'Better one

\* Some accounts say three. There seems to be an uncertainty on the subject, similar to that concerning the progeny of John Rogers, who left, at his martyrdom, "Nine small children, and one at the breast."



son cold, than three sons bereft' [as they would surely have been if no one but Mr. *Min* had looked after them] 能叫一兒寒, 別命三子單。

'The three specialties of *Shen Chou* [a city in central Chihli]; millet, willow rods, and large honey-peaches,' 深州本有三宗寶。小米。柳杆。大蜜桃。

It is evident that some "treasures" might in this way be predicated of any and every place, whatever its importance or lack of importance. For aught that appears to the contrary, the cities of China are all labelled, each with its little rhyme, and the same is true of the regions outside the Great Wall; thus: 'The three treasures from beyond the Barriers. Ginseng. Sable-skins, and *Wu-la* grass,' 口外三宗寶。人參。貂皮。烏拉草。 Ginseng, called the "divine plant," is one of the most precious drugs in the Chinese pharmacopœia. The *Wu-la* grass, so called in imitation of a Mongol and Manchoo word, is much valued by the inhabitants of the "outer regions" for its heating properties. It is worn inside the shoes to keep the feet warm, and the root is a medicine.

'Three curious things beyond the Pass are spied; The walls not laid, but pounded up in boards, the food all ladled out by means of gourds, and the windows pasted on the outer side.' 關東倒有三宗怪。板打牆。瓢舀菜。窗戶紙糊在外。

The most trivial circumstances do not escape the keen eyes of the Chinese, nor is the opportunity lost to turn them to a metaphorical sense. There is a species of frogs in North China which do not croak, but after swelling up as if in promise of emitting a mighty sound, appear suddenly to swallow it. Hence: 'The frogs of *Chi Nan Fu* [also said of other places] give no sound,' 濟南府的蝦蟆乾鼓氣。 Metaphorically of one who swallows his resentment.

Some local sayings refer to the commercial characteristics of certain places, as: 'One Market in Honan [*Chu Hsien Chen* 誅仙鎮], one Fair in Chihli [*Hsin Chi* 新集 in *Chü Lu Hsien* 鉅鹿縣], one Village in Shantung' [*Chou Ts'un* 周村 east of *Chi Nan Fu*], 河南一鎮。直隸一集。山東一村。 Each of these places is the center of an extensive trade.

Some of the sayings of this sort appear extremely trivial, but serve to illustrate the facility with which the Chinese discover

analogies. Thus a local proverb runs: 'The foot-cloths of *Mu Lan Tien* have borders,' 木蘭店的裹脚條子有邊. This is a market town in Honan, where strips of cloth with which women's feet are bound, are worn with a narrow border of fine work on each edge. The expression "It has a border," is used to indicate that an affair can be managed—is not entirely hopeless—and thus resembles the strips of cloth from *Mu Lan Tien*.

'The assortment of goods at the *Mao Chou* fair is complete, yet there are no collars made of the skin of hedge-hogs, no long jackets of pig-skin; neither are there golden manure forks nor silver manure baskets,' 鄭州的貨雖全。沒有刺皮領子。猪皮大褂。金糞叉子銀糞筐. *Mao Chou* is a market town in Central Chihli (probably in former times a city of the second order, as its name implies) celebrated for its great Fair. The saying is used like the one previously quoted in reference to the lack of any temple on *Tai Shan* to *Wu Ta Lang*, to indicate that unreasonable exceptions may be taken to any kind or degree of completeness.

'Go to *Liu Tang K'ou* and cool off,' 叫你上六堂口去涼快. This is a village in Chihli whose inhabitants are reputed to have "no business with any man." One who is very angry is exhorted to go to this lonesome place to get cooled, because it is a cool (unfrequented 冷清) spot.

'When one goes out of the *Chia Yü* Pass, he sees with his two eyes nothing but blue sky,' 出了嘉峪關。兩眼望青天. This Pass is at the southern extremity of the Great Wall, in the province of Kansuh. The regions beyond (on the way to Barkoul) are popularly supposed to be desolation itself. The saying may be applied to one at the end of his resources, "flat on his back, looking up into the sky."

It is common to see pasted over doorways the characters *San To Chiu Ju*, 三多九如. "Three Abundances, Nine Resemblances;" the latter referring to a passage in the Book of Odes. The three things to be wished for in abundance are great Felicity, extreme Old Age, and many Sons (多福多壽多男). A parody on this phrase has become proverbial with regard to the province of Shantung. 'The three abundances of Shantung: more doctors than patients, more school-teachers than readers, more who weave cloth than who wear it,' 山東三多治病的比患病的多、教書的比念書的多、織布的比穿衣裳的多.



There is a class of local sayings which refer to the mental or moral characteristics of the inhabitants, or to their habits of life. As e.g., 'The Peking people are oily-tongued, while Tientsin people [i.e., those who belong to *T'ien Ching Wei* 天津衛] are brawlers,' 京油子、衛嘴子。 Like the ancient saying, "The Cretans are always liars."

'Shansi people drive camel litters, Shantung people carry all their bedding, Chihli people make senseless tumults,' 山西騾駝轎、山東大褥套、直隸瞎胡鬧。 Shansi is a mountainous province, where traveling is conducted by means of litters; Shantung is a densely peopled province, multitudes of whose inhabitants go to great distances to find work. They are the water-carriers and servants in Peking, and they form by far the larger proportion of the population in the province of *Sheng Ching*. In winter the great roads are lined with one unintermittent stream of Shantung men going home, who return to their work in the early spring; hence the allusion to "bedding." The rowdies of Tientsin (called *hun hsing tzu* 混星子) are well known throughout China, and sometimes (as in the Tientsin massacre of 1870) come near to competing with the "dangerous classes" of western countries.

'Southerners are unprincipled, Westerners are penurious, Northerners are foolish,' 奸蠻、細我、獸達子。 The Chinese constantly speak of other Chinese who belong to a different part of the Empire in the same disdainful manner which they employ toward foreigners. Each region has its nickname. In the northern provinces, natives of Kuangtung and Fukien are contemptuously called "Southern Barbarians" (南蠻子). In the same way natives of the northern provinces going southward are derisively styled "Northern Tartars" (北達子). There appears to be very little real unity among the Chinese, simply as citizens of one common country. Thus even a Chihli man, although a resident of the most northern province in China, is called a "Southern Barbarian" when he goes beyond the Great Wall, as much as if he hailed from Canton or Foochow.

The people of Shansi have a unique place in the commercial system of China. A large part of the banking business is in their hands, and it is popularly supposed that no pawnshop can succeed without a Shansi man for manager. They have spread themselves



not only all over the Eighteen Provinces, but far into Central Asia. They are willing to leave their families for years together, while most Chinese return home at least once a year. They are regarded as extremely sagacious in perceiving the smallest pecuniary advantage, alert in using opportunities, patient under provocation, and, when angry, easily appeased by the prospect of a good bargain; thus furnishing a striking contrast to the natives of many other provinces. Hence the common saying, 'Shansi Delvers; they love gain, but do not value their lives,' 山西找子。要財不要命。 The epithet *Chao-tzu* (找子), Seekers, is slightly employed with reference to the qualities already mentioned. Shansi men are also called Old Westerners (老西兒), and are the butt of many bantering sayings; as, for example, the above in a slightly different form, 老西兒捨命不捨財。

'Two Shantung men quarrelling over an onion,' 兩個山東人打架。爲一棵葱。 The people of this province are supposed to be especially addicted to onions. Each region, according to popular belief, has its own peculiar taste. The people of the south delight in sugar, while those of the north use vegetables in pickle, and otherwise consume salt to an extent elsewhere unknown. The Shansi people are celebrated for their fondness for vinegar, and the men of Eastern Shantung for their taste for the pungent. Hence: 'The South sweet, the North salt, the East pungent, the West sour,' 南甜, 北鹹, 東辣, 西酸。 The only remaining one of "the five tastes," bitter (苦) is not localized, perhaps because "eating bitterness" is the prerogative of the entire race.

'When old do not enter *Ssu Ch'uan*, and when young avoid *Kuangtung*,' 老不入川, 少不入廣。 The people of south-western China have the reputation of being much more belligerent than those in the north, therefore beware of *Ssu Ch'uan*. Canton is noted for its licentiousness, and should be avoided by the young.

'The Pekingese are hungry devils, the Tientsin people are thirsty ones,' 北京人是餓死鬼。天津人是渴死鬼。 In Peking the meeting of friends is a signal for an invitation to eat; in Tientsin, to drink tea; at the south, to drink wine.

'Let gods and immortals beware of Twenty-li-shop,' 神仙不入二十里鋪。 A village near *Ho Chien Fu* (河間府) in Chihli, which has a bad name. Local sayings of this sort are probably universal.

'The mountains not high, the waters not deep, the men deceitful, and the women licentious,' 山不高, 水不深, 男多詐, 女多淫. This most uncomplimentary saying is current in regard to *Chi Nan Fu*, and is probably spoken of other places also.

'Hard to leave, hard to give up, is *Han Tan Hsien*' 難捨難離的邯鄲縣. This is a city in south-western Chihli, which is at present known chiefly for the seductive influences thrown around young men who go there to engage in trade.\* It is often mentioned in Chinese history, and contains a few old temples. It is distinguished as the place at which *Lü Tung Pin* (呂洞賓), to whom reference has been already made, had a famous dream. He had fled thither to save his life, and here he found *Chung Li Ch'üan* (鍾離權), (see Mayer's *Manual*, No. 90) in a ruined temple, boiling yellow millet. While looking, *Lü Tung Pin* fell asleep and dreamed that he became Emperor, enjoying all the grandeur of this high position for an entire life time. When he had grown old, as he was about to die, he awoke and found himself again in the same old temple where he had fallen, and, to his surprise, the millet which was at that time on the fire, was not cooked. Reflecting upon his dream, he perceived that all the riches and honor in the world are but emptiness. This determined him to give up the deceitful transitory joys of life, and follow *Chung Li Ch'üan* into retirement, where he became one of the most famous of the Eight Immortals (八仙). This occurrence is constantly referred to in the words: 'The Yellow Millet Dream and Awakening,' 黃粱夢悟, or 'The Dream of *Han Tan* and the return to consciousness,' 邯鄲夢覺.

The phrase is used in connection with other familiar images to indicate the evanescence of wealth, happiness, etc., as in the following verse:—

'Honor and Wealth are like descending dew  
Which lightly falls, then swiftly fades from view;  
So Fame and Glory like the hoar frost white,  
When once the sun shines, vanish from the sight;  
And all the race of Heroes we esteem  
But as the Yellow Millet's transient Dream.'

\* This character is also given in an additional line to another town but a few miles from *Han Tan*, the name of which is *Lin Ming Barrier* (臨名關) but which is popularly designated as the Forty-five li place—the Devil's Gate. 四十五里的鬼門關.



富貴花間露。榮華草上霜。  
世街英雄輩。黃梁夢一場。

Of some local sayings it is difficult or impossible to obtain the explanation, for in China there are in popular circulation no such volumes of "Notes and Queries" as abound in English, wherein the remotest origin of everything is laboriously traced. Of this sort, the following proverb, widely current about Tientsin, and referring to a village in that vicinity, is a specimen. 'If you cannot sell your pepper vinegar elsewhere, go to *Yang Feng Chiang*,' 那裏賣不了辣椒醋一心要上揚阜蔣. This means that if business cannot be done at a profit in one place, there are others which promise better; but what is meant by "pepper-vinegar," even "the oldest inhabitant" of this village does not pretend to know.

A large proportion of proverbs coming under this general head contain an allusion to some person of merely local reputation, and often of no reputation at all; some incident in connection with whom has, however, sufficed to fix his name, like a fly caught in amber. From the nature of these sayings, most of them have a very restricted currency, but within the area where they are known at all, no proverbs are oftener quoted or more universally understood, because of their piquancy and local flavor. They arise by spontaneous generation, and the number is constantly increased by new growths. Their quality will be exhibited in the following examples, many of the characters of which lived at Tientsin.

'*Chou Hsien Sheng* crossing the river—lying down,' 周先生過河、躺下咧. This was a poor man who entered a ferry boat, but as he was known to have no money, the boatman refused to row him over the river. Upon this *Chou* lay down in the boat, which must either cross the river or suspend business. The words "*Chou Hsien Sheng* crossing the river," are used in reference to a person who is asleep, or who has tripped. The whole point in the quotation of sayings of this sort, lies in omitting the predicate, which is supposed to be immediately supplied by the hearer. "

'*Liu Lao Wan* dropping his cakes—in deep trouble,' 劉老萬掉饅饅、惱心. This was a coolie who early every morning left home in quest of employment, taking with him the cakes which Tientsin workmen (who have but two regular meals a day) are always nibbling in the intervals of their work. One day he dropped his cakes, which some one else picked up. An acquaintance met



him, and began to jest with him, but he replied: "I have a heavy heart." Upon inquiry all his trouble turned out to be owing to the loss of his lunch. Hence the expression is tantamount to "much ado about nothing."

'*Wang Shih Erh* taking no medicine—died of his disease,' 王十二不下藥。死症。 Used in reference to anything for which there is no help—deep poverty, etc.

'*Hsing San* assisting at a funeral—not a man,' 刑三兒吊紙。不是人。 The musicians hired for funeral occasions are in the habit of striking up with their instruments whenever any of the family which is in mourning appears. This man *Hsing* was the friend of a family which had lost one of its members, and acted as general manager. At his approach the musicians were about to "blow music," when he hastily interposed, exclaiming: "I am not a man." What he intended to say was that he was not one of the family, but this casual slip of the tongue has served to perpetuate his name, and to spread it far and wide; for this saying (as well as the next) is said to be extensively current, not only in considerable parts of the province of Chihli, but in portions of Shantung, Honan, and all over Manchuria—where a certain percentage of the population are from Tientsin. Such is the imperishable vitality of a casual expression! The words "*Hsing San* assisting at a funeral," form a convenient mode of reviling one, in the oblique Chinese manner, meaning, "You do not deserve to be called a man."

'*Mei Hsien Sheng* filching a tobacco pipe—done because it must be done,' 梅先生拔烟袋。不得已而爲之。 This individual, feeling "the pinch of poverty," stole a pipe. When detected he quoted the phrase from Mencius. The incongruity of a classically educated sneak-thief has kept green the memory of his theft and of his citation, and given its perpetrator a celebrity which no amount of merely honest scholarship would have secured to him.

This same quotation is sometimes made to do duty in a different connection. There is a local legend in the province of Shantung of a Literary Graduate (秀才) who was too poor to own a donkey, and who therefore employed a man—such is the inverted condition of the labor market in China—to turn the stone roller by which the grain is ground. Happening along one day, the scholar saw his servant engaged in this occupation, which is regarded as the special prerogative of beasts and women, and injudiciously laughed. His

employee flew into a fury, and vowed that his master should turn the roller himself or be beaten if he refused. As the hired man was physically the stronger, the Hsiu-ts'ai had no resource but to comply. Hence the saying: 'The Literary Graduate turning the mill—did it because he was compelled to do it,' 秀才推磨。不得已而爲之。

'Melon-rinds for shoe patches—not the article sold by regular dealers,' 西瓜皮打掌子。不是正經客貨。 A half-blind shoemaker was imposed upon by a wag, who gave him a lot of dried water-melon rinds, representing them to be donkey-skin. When some one came to have his shoe mended, the cobbler used this new leather for the purpose in perfect good faith. The next day the rent was as bad as ever, and the customer returned to make complaint of the bad work. The disciple of Crispin examined the shoe and—still unsuspecting of any joke—merely observed that this particular leather had not reached him through the regular channels of trade (不是正經客貨), which has passed into a euphemistic expression for any one or anything not up to the mark.

'Deaf Wang firing a cannon—no explosion,' 王聾子放炮。散了。 Whether there was a sound or not, he could not hear it. Met. of any business unfinished.

'Kao San at the ancestral graves—an incessant stream of reviling,' 高三上墳罵不絕聲。 This was an unfilial son, who lived in the days of Chia Ch'ing. Lest others should ridicule him, he unwillingly paid the customary visits to the family graves, where, however, he spent his whole time in insulting his ancestors by vile language. Met. of anything done unwillingly, and which leads to abusive words.

'Sha Hsi selling dumplings—the bottom fallen out,' 饅喜賣包子。掉了底咧。 This was a voracious youngster who was in the habit of eating off the bottom of the meat dumplings which he was sent upon the street to sell. When asked how they came to be defective at the base, he invariably replied that they were made so in the first place. Met. of heavy losses, or of any circumstance of which it may be said "the bottom has dropped out."

'Sha Hsi driving home ducks—they all came,' 饅喜兒趕鴨子。全來咧。 Being hired to take care of a flock of ducks, he returned one night with a great many of them being missing. On



being asked where the rest had gone, he replied: "They have all come." When he was told to count them and see, he replied that he did not know how to count, he only know that "they have all come." Said of a complete gathering, etc.

'The little priest dragging a chain—it will be the death of me,' 小老道拉鎖。苦死弟子了。 This lad was set to perform a vow, after the manner of Buddhist and Taoist priests, by dragging a long and heavy iron chain. Whenever he was overcome by the fatigue of this severe labor, he would exclaim: "This will be the death of me!" An expression now proverbial for extreme misery.

'Wang, the District Magistrate, investigating a case—"You are a scamp!"' 王太爺問案，不是好人。 This man held office in the Tientsin District in 1821. He was an excellent official, virtuous and intelligent. Whenever a blackleg was brought before him, his invariable observation was: "You are not a good man," i.e., you are a knave.

'Chin Hsien Sheng begging—one cash,' 金先生伸托。一文錢。 This was a rich man of the reign of Hsien Feng, who was as unfilial as his father had been before him. No one who worked for him, or had any dealings with him, left his door without reviling him. The vengeance of heaven, however, overtook him; for a son, whose abilities gave much promise of his future, suddenly became deranged. He soon reduced the property to nothing, and Chin Hsien Sheng became himself a beggar. Whenever he met any one, he stretched out his hand, and cried: "Give me one cash!" The words are used to signify a single copper.

'Huo Te carrying the god of medicine—oppressed by fate,' 霍得兒抬藥王爺。運壓的。 This is another instance of a lapse of speech becoming proverbial. Huo Te, who lived in the time of Tao Kuang, attended the Fair held in honor of the god of medicine, and helped to carry the chair in which the divinity himself rode. Suddenly Huo Te stumbled and fell, when he exclaimed: 'I was oppressed by fate' (yün ya 運壓的). What he intended to say was that he was made dizzy by the weight (ya yün 壓運的). Used of persons whose fate is against them, and also of confusion as to the points of the compass, etc.

'Making pewter tankards at midnight—habituated to cry his wares,' 半夜打壺餅，慣了嘴兒咧。 This refers to an artisan whose daily cry was: "Pewter mugs made!" One night he called



out these words in a dream, from which circumstance the expression has become a synonym for any fixed habit.

'*Pai Erh's* mother riding in a sedan chair—the first time,' 白兒他媽媽坐轎。頭一末兒。 This woman when a child was adopted by the family into which she was to marry (童養的媳婦), and therefore had no opportunity to go from home (出門) when she was married, and thus never entered a sedan chair. One night she was summoned in haste to attend a sick neighbor, and a sedan was sent for her. Instead of backing into the chair as others do, she walked under the canopy, and then turned around. The chair-coolies all laughed at her, to whom she *naively* responded, "It is the first time I was ever in a chair." Hence "*Pai Erh's* mother in a chair," is used for a trial trip, or first experiment of any kind.

'*San Wang Yeh* begging—bold language,' 三王爺打磚。好大口氣。 This refers to a play in which a character appears in the depths of poverty who strikes his bare back with a brick (打磚) after the manner of Chinese beggars to excite sympathy. His demands, however, instead of being confined like those of ordinary mendicants to a single cash, or at most two, were for "yellow gold," "white silver," "real pearls," "precious jade," etc. If, however, the individual solicited was positively unprovided with any of these offerings, *San Wang Yeh* professed himself willing to put up with a tael of silver. Used of impudent demands.

'*Hsiao Pai Lien Tzu*—never seen,' 小白臉子。不見面兒。 This Little White Face was a thief of extraordinary discretion in his movements, who lived in such perpetual seclusion as to be never taken. Used of persons who are difficult to find.

'*Liu Kao Shou* curing a malady—external practice takes no account of internal maladies,' 劉高手治病。外科不管內科事。 A man was wounded in the right temple by an arrow which passed through his temple (apparently into the frontal sinus) and came out at the left temple. The physician named above, was called to attend the case, and taking a saw, cut off the ends of the arrow close to the man's head, and (according to the invariable practice of Chinese doctors) stuck on a plaster over the wound. To this treatment the family offered the natural objection that the body of the arrow was still unextracted, to which he replied: "External practitioners have nothing to do with internal complaints." The phrase

is used of outsiders (局外的) in distinction from those directly concerned.

Medical skill of this quality would not seem to entitle its possessor to the general confidence of the public, nor to any celebrity in the item of diagnosis. Yet another local saying declares that when *Liu Kao Shou* shook his head, there was no help for the patient, 劉高手搖頭, 不治之症. The more one understands of the Chinese Theory and Practice of Medicine, the more accurate appears the observation attributed in the *Analects* to Confucius, that the qualifications for being a Wizard and a Doctor are in one respect identical!

'*Niu Ts'ai tzu* calling his sister—100 cash' (牛才子叫姐姐, 一百錢). This was a bad character, whose sister's family would not allow him to enter the door. Every day he came to the entrance of the yard, and called "Sister! Sister!" who always gave him the same amount. The expression has become one of the numerous circumlocutions denoting an hundred cash.

'*Ch'eng T'o* [Steelyard-Weight] becoming an Ensign—when luck comes it brings astuteness,' 秤鉈坐把總, 福至心靈. Steelyard-Weight was the nickname of a soldier in the days of Ch'ien Lung, who once paid a visit to Tientsin. *Ch'eng T'o* was at the time in charge of the ammunition, and at another he practiced athletics, for which, by reason of his insignificant stature, he was very ill fitted. He had a stalwart comrade, to whom he proposed that when the Emperor reviewed the troops, and they had an opportunity to display their skill in boxing, the big fellow should allow himself to be overthrown by his little antagonist. This unexpected result would probaby amuse the Emperor. It was further agreed that if His Majesty bestowed any pecuniary reward, as in such cases is often done, the defeated comrade should receive the lion's share. Everything was done as planned—the Emperor was delighted, but contrary to programme, he bestowed no money, but promoted the Steelyard-Weight to be an Ensign. His unrewarded companion "died of vexation." The incident is used as an illustration of the proverb which it embodies.

'The vicious *T'ien San Sao*, disturber of the household—jumped into the Yellow River and stirred it up,' 攪家不賢的田三嫂. 跳在黃河裏水都不清. This woman is variously referred to the time of K'ang Hsi or to that of the "Three Em-



perors" (a chronological variation of several thousands or perhaps tens of thousands of years). She was undutiful to her father-in-law and to her mother-in-law, would not reverence her husband, and succeeded in breaking up the whole family. Being divorced by her husband, she sought to marry again, but no one would risk the venture. In her vexation she plunged in the Yellow River, which was ever after turbid! ❧

'*Kao Erh Hen Tzu* beheaded—just in time for the new law,' 高二狼子挨刀赶上律條咧. This was a rowdy who became involved in a serious fracas. The Governor-General had recently memorialized the Emperor to make the employment of every form of military weapon by civilians a capital crime. When this offence occurred, the imperial decree had lately been published. *Kao Erh* was just in time to be overtaken by the new law. The saying is used, e.g., of merchants who send their goods to a place where the market rate is high, just in time to meet a fall in prices.

'In charge of Old Mamma Wang—gone where they'll be done to death,' 屬老王媽媽的, 往死處裏照管. Two motherless children were put in her care by the father, who was engaged in trade at a distance. She "did" them both to death. Used of ruining another's business under guise of helping him.

'Like Old Mother Ning—knows history,' 屬老寧媽媽的, 知古. A very intelligent old lady, but most of what she knew was odds and ends wrongly put together. Used of "rotten scholarships" (腐儒).

'*San T'u Tzu* performing—now look at me!' 三禿子賣藝, 瞧咱的. This was a gymnast who exhibited feats of sword exercise for a living. When the other performers had finished he always cried: "Now look at me!" Used of self-praise.

'*Ch'i Shih Erh* catching sparrows—deliberately,' 七十兒打家雀, 趁着. This was a lad who spread his nets, remaining at a distance, but when any birds were attracted, he crept up slowly like a shadow, and succeeded in taking them, while others failed. Used of caution in general.

'*Chao Te Hui* burning paper at the ancestral graves—poorer each year than the last,' 趙得會燒紙, 一年不及一年的. This individual flourished in the reign of Ch'ien Lung. When he suddenly became rich he was told that he ought to show his respect for his ancestors by burning paper at their graves, according to



custom. This he accordingly did for some years, and then left off that practice. Upon being asked why he no longer conformed to the usage, he replied: "When I burned no paper at the graves, I grew rich. Since I began to burn paper, I have been worse off each year than the one before." Said of things, which are worse every year than the last.

'*Hei Hsiung* selling a dog—come to life again' 黑熊賣狗。又活了。 Near the west gate of Tientsin are shops in which dog-flesh is sold. When a wealthy family owns a dog which dies, it is customary to give it to one of the servants to be disposed of for their own benefit. *Hei Hsiung*, "Black Bear," was a coolie to whom a dead dog had been given in this way. On the way to the dog-flesh shop the animal opportunely came to life again. The Black Bear was an honest fellow, and instead of knocking the dog on the head, and saying nothing about the matter, he took it back to its owner, observing: "It has come to life again" (又活了). The expression is used of anything which after apparent failure, still succeeds, and shows vitality (活動了).

'With such an eye as yours to try to hunt with a falcon!' 你這個眼兒。還要玩鷹。 This refers to a man named *Ch'en Erh* (陳二), one of whose eyes had been injured so as to be useless, and who was besides near-sighted. He was very fond of hunting for hares with a falcon, but his imperfect sight prevented him from recognizing his prey. On one occasion his falcon chased a crow, and *Ch'en Erh* mistaking the crow for the falcon pursued it a long time in vain. Used in ridicule of those who attempt tasks for which they have no capacity.

'You might as well go and demand it of *Ch'u Erh Ko*,' 你只好找褚二哥要去。 This was an avaricious man who kept his creditors at bay with elusive promises from day to day, but who never paid his debts, so that his name became a synonym for anything entirely hopeless.

'Do not take him for a *Chia Pao Erh*,' 別拿着他當買保兒待。 This refers to a preternaturally stupid man who was so constantly cheated, and badly used, that to treat a man as if he were *Chia Pao Erh* signifies to impose upon him.

'*Wu Chün Hsi* making a bow—delaying,' 吳均喜作揖。沉一沉。 *Wu* was a bad character who lived in the time of *Tao*

*Kuang*. Having had a fight with some one, third parties intervened to assist in making peace, which is considered to be re-established when the principals have met and saluted each other in a formal bow. When the time came to perform this ceremony, *Wu*, who was an insolent bully, instead of making a bow simultaneously with his late antagonist, remained bolt upright. The expression is used of any delay.

'*Yü San Sheng* blowing his whiskers—used up,' 余三勝吹鬚子, 屬咧。 This was a theatrical performer who was accustomed, according to the practice of his profession, to strut across the stage, puffing his whiskers about, to indicate his great importance. Being old and short of breath, when he wished to seem angry he could no longer blow his whiskers as aforetime. The saying is employed of prestige which has been lost, or of decaying power.

'*Pao Chü Wu* eating chestnuts—shrivelled,' 鮑居五吃栗子, 屬咧。 *Pao Chü Wu's* father had not a single hair on his head. The son being immoderately filial (on the Chinese plan) would never, under any circumstance, pronounce the character *t'u* 禿, which signifies "bald." This same word is, however, provincially applied to chestnuts which have been injured by heat. Some one gave *Chü Wu* a nut of this kind, to see if he could not be surprised into calling it "bald," but he only remarked "that it was dried up" (屬咧). This phrase, like the last, is used of anything which is disappointing—as a man without talent, a purse with no money, etc.

'*Yen Sheng Chih* wearing a fur robe—the public would not approve it,' 閔盛芝穿皮襖, 衆人不服。 This man was very poor all his life, but when old grew rich. He then altered his apparel and appeared in a handsome fur garment. Everybody laughed at his costume, as unsuited to his antecedents. Used of anything which gives general dissatisfaction.

'*Sun Hou* eating *mei su* pills—troubled in heart,' 孫猴吃梅蘇丸, 惱心。 *Sun*, who acquired the nickname of "Monkey," was so incorrigibly dull of apprehension that others were perpetually making him a butt for their jests. On one occasion, when he had taken cold, and was suffering from a violent pain in the stomach, some one recommended this variety of pills as a certain cure. Now thyme (蘇) is a "cooling drug," and the pills only



made his pain much worse than before. When asked how he felt, he replied: "I am vexed in spirit." Used of anything causing trouble or anxiety.

'*Tu Lai Tai* eating betel-nut,—suffering from vertigo,' 杜賴歹吃檳榔暈了頭咧. This man was victimized in the same way as the last individual mentioned. For two days he had eaten nothing, when he was presented with a betel-nut to eat, which, in order to be digested, should be taken after a full meal. The proverb runs: "Betel-nut taken into an empty stomach induces dizziness in the head." 空肚子吃檳榔頭暈. To this dietetic maxim *Lai Tai* paid no attention, and suffered the penalty. The expression is employed in reference to one who has a task laid upon him to which he is entirely inadequate, and who only becomes confused in attempting it.

'*La T'u tzu* and his wife—everything at cross purposes,' 辣禿子娶媳婦慫慫忸忸. This man's partner proved—as in Chinese households is apt to be the case—an "imperfect sympathy." The allusion to this couple suggests that the person or thing which is referred to, is irritating and vexatious.

'The District Magistrate welcoming the local constable—I miscalculated,' 太爺接地方. 小的錯話了回咧. This is another slip of the tongue immortalized. In the reign of Hsien Feng, strolling marauders threatened Tientsin, and the District Magistrate visited the western suburbs to inspect the defences. It was the duty of the local constable, on the approach of the Magistrate, to kneel and say: "The local constable receives his Honor." On this occasion the constable committed a blunder similar to that of a servant in an American family, which was favored with the presence of an English Bishop. This servant had been carefully instructed to go to the door of the Bishop's room in the morning, and knock, saying "The Boy, my Lord." The young republican, unfamiliar with titles of this kind, on hearing the Bishop inquiring who it was, replied in confusion, "The Lord, my boy!" In this case the local constable saluted the *Chih hsien* with the observation: "His honor receives the constable." When the Magistrate was about to beat him for his impertinence, he hastily apologized, in the words 錯話了回咧, instead of 錯回了話咧. The phrase is used of one mistake added to another.



Sayings, in themselves purely local, are probably to be met with everywhere and, as remarked, constantly increasing in number. The two following examples were dug up in little country villages, and are, of course, quite unintelligible a few miles away.

'*Pang Pin's* cart-house—far out of plumb,' 龐債的車屋。離線。 *Pang Pin* had occasion to build a shed for his cart, and as usual the workmen suspended a line by which to lay the wall. But as the work on a mere shed was of small importance no attention was paid to the line, and the opening was after all too narrow for the cart. Used of great mistakes.

'*Keng Ch'ien* telling stories—for nothing,' 耿謙說書。白說。 This young man had learned the art of telling historical tales and visited a neighboring village to exhibit his knowledge. At the conclusion of his first evening he suggested that if benches were provided, he would come again. To some objection he replied: 'Oh, at present I tell tales for nothing' (白說的). Used of any useless proposition (白說的).

The method in which sayings of this sort spring into circulation, is illustrated in the following circumstance. In a certain district there lived a notorious bully, named *Wang Wan Hsüan*, who kept every one in awe of him. In some trivial affair, he at length incurred the ill-will of a widely extended family named *Li*, who resolved to show by a swift and terrible vengeance that their clan was not to be trifled with. Accordingly a band of some two hundred armed men went to the house of *Wang* by night, dragged him to an unfrequented spot, beat him until he was almost dead, and then inflicted a most barbarous mutilation, so as to render sight and speech (and consequently revenge) forever impossible. The poor wretch died a day or two afterward, leaving only a widow and one son. There was very little property, and there were no influential friends, the indispensable concomitants of successful litigation in China. Still the outrage was so atrocious, and so notorious, that it is difficult to see how its perpetrators could avoid punishment when once complaint was lodged against them. The case was, however, protracted for several years and cost the *Li* family a large sum, which was raised by the sale of the cypress trees growing in the ancestral cemetery. By the time the suit was concluded—several members of the *Li* family being banished, but no one executed—the

whole grove had been swallowed up in the costs, and had disappeared. The remembrance of this affair is perpetuated in the following proverbial couplet:—

要了王萬選的命。  
李家的墳樹賣了个净。

'The champion Wang in clannish feud,  
Was killed by the family Li,  
The lawsuit left their graveyard nude,  
With never a single tree.'

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *Puns and Other Linguistic Diversions.*

The peculiar structure of the written character, and the homophonous nature of the Chinese language, render every variety of play, both upon the shapes of characters and upon their meaning, not only easy but inevitable. The great use which is made of such play by the Chinese themselves may justify a somewhat extended illustration of their widely varying qualities. In order to accomplish this end, it will be necessary to make little excursions here and there into regions which do not pertain exclusively to "Proverbs and Common Sayings." Yet, with the Reader's permission, will we imitate the sagacious Donkey on the broad highway, who, as the saying goes, takes now a nibble on this side, and now a bite on that (大路上的驢子東一口西一口), still all the while making a general, though somewhat deliberate, progress toward his goal.

There are, in the first place, what among a people so practical and sober as the Chinese we should least have expected, *Acted Puns* or *Charades*.

Thus in some localities it is customary, upon moving into a new dwelling, that the first articles which are introduced shall be a vase (瓶 *P'ing*), which is placed upon a table (檯 *An*), accompanied by the ornament called *Ju-i* (如意) or As-you-wish, made of jade or wood and shaped like a flattened letter S. The singular, and to an Occidental perfectly incomprehensible proceeding, is a Chinese charade or acted pun, upon the familiar expression: *P'ing an ju-i*, 平安如意. In plain words the meaning is, 'May you in your new home enjoy Peace and Tranquillity,' and 'obtain all the desire of your heart.'

Again we meet with the *picture pun*. Of this the common saying, *K'ao Tien ch'ih fan*, 靠天吃飯, 'Man depends upon Heaven for food'\* may serve as an example. It is not unusual to

\* It is customary in some of the countless Sects of China for the Head-master (老師傅) to assign to the members the task of composing an Ode upon some subject connected with the doctrines taught. (Imagine a Christian congre-



see lithographs of tablets in which this proverb has been represented in a very effective manner. A man is depicted as engaged in swallowing a bowl of rice while he leans (*K'ao* 靠) against a gigantic *T'ien*, 天, character. One of these tablets is to be seen in the *Hui Ch'üan Szu* (匯泉寺) in the city of *Chi Nan Fu*. The letter-press below the engraving sometimes gives excellent advice on the art of practicing "Virtue," for the sake of attracting attention to which the picture pun was apparently devised.

Upon the wall which is always erected in front of the entrance of a Chinese *yamen* to screen it from the street (照壁) is constantly to be seen, as every one knows, a representation of a frightful composite quadruped, equipped with the scales of a fish, the head of a dragon, the tail of a lion, and the hoofs of a horse, and called a *t'an*. The monster is fabled to have an insatiable appetite for

gation where the minister committed to the individuals who happened to be present the business of inditing the hymns to be used at the next meeting!) That the persons to whom this task is allotted cannot read a single character, and are utterly ignorant of the laws of rhyme and rhythm, is a circumstance of no moment whatever. Any sort of a composition, however unequal the lines or however imperfect the rhymes, will pass muster. In what is known as the Sect of Old Heaven (老天門), the following crude verses were produced in this way. They furnish a sort of commentary on the proverb quoted above, and also in the closing line exemplify the inconsequential nature of the popular theological thinking, where by a singular anticlimax the debt said to be due to Heaven is made payable to Buddha!

'On Heaven we lean—on Heaven we all depend;  
 'Tis Heaven that doth our food and raiment send;  
 When this we ponder, and minutely weigh,  
 The debt we owe to Heaven seems hard to pay.  
 The Rain, the Dew—from Heaven they have their birth,  
 And overspread the surface of the earth.  
 In plenteous years with bounteous food we're blest,  
 And none by cold and hunger are distress;  
 Each day we eat our periodic meals,  
 And Heaven's great goodness each recipient feels.  
 What shall we offer up to Heaven, its mercy to requite?  
 We ought to beat upon our breast, and *Buddha's* praise recite.'

依天靠天。對天要吃穿。  
 詳參細參。天恩難報還。  
 天降雨露。普地下邊。  
 豐收了。同吃飽飯。不受飢寒。  
 諸日吃三餐。如吃天一般。  
 將何物對天顯獻。  
 拍拍心。該將佛念。

devouring the Sun, upon his attempting to swallow which he invariably falls and is dashed in pieces upon his native mountains. This thinly disguised allegory is intended to illustrate the folly of avarice (貪), the character for which is employed to represent the beast in question, thus furnishing another instance of the picture pun. By the side of the *t'an* are drawn tigers, leopards, etc., with ingots of gold and silver in close proximity, to denote that wherever (unjust) gain is to be had, it is accompanied with certain loss (有利必有害).

Whatever may have been its original effect upon Chinese officials, there is reason to fear that this form of admonition has long since become perfectly inert. The permanent and universal appointment of these fabulous creatures to perform this singular function exhibits, however, the strong bias of the Chinese mind toward word-play. Who but the Chinese would have selected the Bat as the pictorial emblem of Happiness? And this is done, not because the Bat is supposed to enjoy more felicity than a Cat, a Rat, or a Hedgehog, but merely on the ground that the character which means Bat (*Fu* 蝠) happens to be identical in sound with the character which denotes Prosperity (*Fu* 福). Thus in one drawing we meet with a corpulent officer in a red robe, grasping in his hand a sword. Immediately in front are five red bats (五個紅蝠); this suggests the phrase *Fu tsai yen ch'ien* 福在眼前, i.e., 'Happiness (all the five kinds) are before you in plain sight.'

Again, a vase (*P'ing* 瓶), with clear vapor issuing from its mouth, is drawn with the five bats in the midst of the vapor. This suggests *Ch'ing p'ing wu fu* 清平五福, 'Perfect Tranquillity and the Five Felicities.'

Other examples are extremely abundant, a few specimens of which will suffice to illustrate their character. In some of them the pun is imperfect. For instance, a bat holds in his mouth two golden cash, and in his claws peaches, which represent the fruit of immortality ripening in the gardens of *Hsi Wang Mu* (西王母) but once in 3,000 (or as others say 9,000) years. The bat stands for Prosperity, *Fu* (福), the peach for Old Age, *Shou* (壽), while the two cash (*shuang-ch'ien* 雙錢) very imperfectly suggest the words *shuang-ch'üan* (雙全) 'both complete;' the whole picture thus standing for the expression, *Fu Shou shuang ch'üan* 福壽雙全, i.e., 'Happiness and Longevity each in completeness.'



The characters representing Prosperity, Wealth, etc., are those most constantly met with in this connection. Thus, a few buds of the peony (called the Flower of Wealth, because found in the gardens of the rich) placed beside a jar in which are seen a pair of gold fish, suggests the words *Fu kuei yu yü* 富貴有餘, i.e., 'Riches and Honor in Superabundance.'

So also a kind of halberd, having a crescent-shaped blade, and known as *Chi* (戟), with a musical plate, *Ch'ing* (磬), and two fish, stand for the phrase *Chi ch'ing yu yü* 吉慶有餘, signifying 'Auspicious Happiness in Overmeasure.'

The *Ju-i* or curved ornament already referred to, is a common object in pictures, denoting the realization of one's wishes. Thus a pen, *Pi* (筆), a lump of silver, *Ting* (錠), and a hook, *Kou* (鉤) (the latter suggesting the *Ju-i*), stand for the words *Pi ting ju i*, 必定如意, meaning that events will 'Certainly happen as you wish.'

So likewise two branches of a persimmon tree, *Shih* (柿), with the hook as before, signify, 'Everything will turn out as you desire,' *Shih shih ju i* 事事如意.

Felicitous sentences expressing a desire for sons who shall obtain official distinction are frequent subjects for picture-puns. Thus a cock crowing in the midst of a flock of little chickens denotes 'Instruction of sons to gain a name' 教子成名, the last character being suggested by the crowing (*Ta ming* 打鳴) of the cock, an accomplishment which he is supposed to be imparting to his children.

A cap, *Kuan* (冠); a girdle, *Tai* (帶); a boat, *Ch'uan* (船); and a pomegranate, *Liu* (榴), signify a wish that the members of a family in successive generations may obtain official position, *Kuan tai ch'uan liu* 官代傳流.

So likewise the picture of two children, one of whom clasps a reed pipe, *sheng* (笙), and holds in his hand a lotus blossom, *lien* (蓮), while the other grasps a cassia flower, *Kuei* (桂), suggests: 'May you have a succession of honorable sons,' *Lien sheng kuei tzu* 連生貴子.

A single additional example must suffice. Upon the screen walls of certain yamêns is to be seen an old man called the Heavenly Magistrate (天官), who points with his finger to the sun, *Chih jih* (指日). Beneath is a peck measure, *Tou* (斗), which is an allusion to the pint, *Sheng* (升), ten of which make a Chinese peck.



The hidden significance of this delineation is found in the words *Chih jih kao sheng* 指日高陞, 'Pointing to the day of lofty promotion.' On one side are a brace of deer, *Lu* (鹿), which intimate that the post to which the happy individual is to be appointed will have an abundant emolument, *Lu* (祿).

The ordinary conversation of the Chinese is full of puns of every imaginable quality, from the coarse banter of the peasant, to the refined quibble of the scholar. Of the former an instance occurs in the expression upon the lips of every one in China, *Fa ts'ai* (發財), to get rich. When he hears an acquaintance boasting of his prospects, or of his achievements in this line, the auditor derisively exclaims: *Fa ts'ai! Fa kuan ts'ai!* (發棺材), 'Get a coffin!' implying that is the only wealth he is likely to gain. Used by a person of his own affairs, it is self-depreciatory. A still more attenuated form of the same idea is to speak of 'putting forth clouds,' *fa yun-ts'ai* (發雲彩), the extreme of insubstantiality. "Why do you persist in eating such quantities of onions" (*ts'ung* 葱) was asked of a countryman. "Oh! I am trying to acquire a little intelligence" (*Chang i tien ts'ung ming* 長一點聰明) was the ready answer.

'It is not strange that the man is deaf, like his father,' said one in reply to an expression of wonder at the coincidence; does not the proverb say: 'The Deaf beget deaf children, and Phoenixes beget Phoenixes?' (聾生聾鳳生鳳). What the proverb does say, however, is nothing of the kind, but that "Dragons (*Lung*, identical in sound with *Lung* deaf) beget Dragons" (龍生龍鳳生鳳).

It is related of the celebrated Chinese beauty *Pao Ssu* (褒姒) that she fell into a confirmed melancholy, and would never smile. By a false alarm, the feudatory princes were summoned to the capital to defend the State, and at sight of their embarrassment and surprise *Pao Ssu* burst into a laugh (see Mayer's Manual, No. 541). Hence the saying: 'Thousands of gold would not buy this one laugh' 千金難買這一笑. An individual who had established a public school (*I hsiao* 義學) and who found the expenses far in excess of his anticipations, epitomized his experience in a new reading of this saying: *Ch'ien chin nan mai che i hsiao* 義學, "Thousands of gold would not pay for this public school."

'Enough, enough,' exclaimed a guest to the host who was pouring the inevitable cup of tea, 'Do not fill it. Fullness makes mischief' (滿招損), a quotation from the Shu Ching and the I Ching; 'Pride (fullness) invites calamity; humility reaps its reward' (謙受益).\*

On an occasion when boat-hire on the Peiho river was extravagantly high, a party of Chinese engaged a passage on a boat (坐船) to Tung Chou. At night the boat was found to be so crowded with passengers that there was not even room to *lie down*. Complaint was made to the head boatman, who promptly replied that no injustice had been done to anyone, since all they bargained for was space to *sit up in* (講的是坐船).

A Chinese upon being introduced to a foreigner who had selected the extraordinary surname of *K'a* (卡) immediately inquired for the character, and being informed that it was that which consists in the combination of 'up' and 'down' (上下=卡) not inaptly replied that such a name as that 'would not work up,' and 'would not go down' (上不來下不去).

It is not foreigners only who are bantered by 'borrowing' their names. Many Chinese nicknames are clever hits at a man's character, while others hit his character through his characters. Thus an official, unpopular on account of his undue severity, whose name was *Ch'en Ssu Liang* (陳嗣良), received the nickname of *Ch'en Ssu Liang* 沉四兩, *q.d.* Too heavy by four ounces (in the pound).

In the province of Shantung, contiguous to the Grand Canal, are two little villages which were, among others, originally set apart for the home of those appointed to public service on the Canal. Such villages are called *T'un* (屯) and—the invention of more ambitious names perhaps involving too much mental exertion—several of these hamlets received as designation only numbers as *Ti san t'un* (第三屯), *Ti wu t'un* (第五屯), *Ti ch'i t'un* (第七屯), etc., commonly called simply No. 3, No. 5, No. 7, etc. The story goes that at a market in the vicinity, a customer turning over

\*The homophony of the Chinese language has been previously mentioned. Theoretically it should lead to constant ambiguity, but this is far less frequent than might be expected.

The teacher of a large school for Chinese girls is authority for the statement that one of her pupils misunderstood the Scripture expression *hu-li yu tung* (狐狸有洞), "Foxes have holes," to mean, "There is a commotion in the tea-pot" (壺裏有動).



some watermelons, discovered a defect on the under side, and remarked that they were 'ground covered' (*Ti wu ti* (地搗的), i.e., prevented from acquiring the proper color by their contact with the soil, *q.d.* raised at *Ti Wu* (第五的)). "No," replied the seller, "they are only 'imposed on by the earth'" (*Ti ch'i ti* 地欺的), i.e., hindered from ripening by the ground under them, *q.d.* raised at *Ti Ch'i* (第七的)).

It is the custom in China when scholars meet scholars, to entertain each other in a manner worthy of those whose minds are enriched with the splendid spoils of ages gone by. On such occasions wine is the proper beverage. Hence the saying! 'When a guest arrives on a cold winter's night, tea must do for wine' (寒夜客來、茶當酒). The serving of wine thus becomes a sort of test of the sincerity of a host's hospitality. No excuses will take its place, but if it is actually brought on, the genuineness of the welcome is not to be questioned. Another proverb accordingly says: 'He has no dissimulation who treats his guests with wine' (將酒待客、並無訛意).

A certain scholar, like most of his class very poor, one day received a visit from a friend whom he wished to entertain in the proper manner. Wine, however, he had none, nor yet the money to purchase it wherewithal. Still he brought out wine cups and the wine jar, from which he proceeded to pour out pure water, with the apposite remark, 'The intercourse of real friends is thin like water; that of false friends is like honey mixed with oil' (真朋友淡淡如水、假朋友蜜裏調油).

The following anecdotes may serve to show the strong current which sets toward play on words in every stratum of society. A young man of somewhat limited mental capacity, who was lately married, paid his wife's family a New Year's visit. His brothers-in-law, knowing his peculiarities, resolved, by employing those means of which the Chinese are such consummate masters, to show him disrespect, without actual rudeness. Although it was now mid-winter, he was accordingly provided with sleeping accommodations on a cold 'stove-bed,' or *k'ang*. The Chinese horror of a cold *k'ang* is proverbial, 'Sleep on a cold bed, but not on a cold *k'ang*' (能睡涼床、不睡涼炕). 'The little Idiot'—another proverb runs—'sleeps on a cold *k'ang*; but that is because he is strong and vigorous' (傻小子睡涼炕、全仗身子).



壯)\* It was therefore no compliment to our friend that his *k'ang* was not heated, yet he retired without complaint. During the night, however, finding it unendurably cold he awaked, and perceiving in a corner a large timber, he seized it and strode back and forth, carrying upon his shoulder (*k'ang* 扛) the beam (*liang* 樑), until he was thoroughly warmed, when he returned to his slumbers. In the morning his hosts professed much anxiety to know how he had fared, and especially whether his bed had not proved too cold (*K'ang liang ma* 炕涼麼). 'Ah!' exclaimed their guest, 'If I had not shouldered the beam, I should have frozen!' (*Pu k'ang liang chiu tung ssu liao* 不扛樑就凍死了.)

A Chinese skimmer, called a *Chao li* (箒籬), costs so little that it is not worth while to mend it when broken. Hence the proverb, 'Who though he has ready money will mend a skimmer?' † (when for the money which repair would cost, he could buy a new one). (誰有閒錢補箒籬). Now it is a general custom to hang out a skimmer at the door of a house where a lodging for foot travellers may be had, a simple means of notification which saves much useless inquiry.

If the Reader never before heard of this practice, he need not be surprised, for he has company in his ignorance. On one occasion the Emperor Ch'ien Lung was riding in his chariot, accompanied by his minister *Ho Shen* (和珅). Chancing to see a skimmer hung over a door, His Majesty inquired what it was for, and was informed that it was used to dip up things (撈東西). The Emperor with affected surprise replied, 'Cannot the North and South then be dipped up with it? How is it that it only dips up East and West?' "Because," instantly replied the Minister, "the South

\* The meaning of this saying—as of so many others in Chinese—is figurative: "The young simpleton, incapable of asserting his rights, is protected by Heaven" (which gives him a good constitution). Another shade of the same idea is expressed in the proverb, "The half witted fellow who always gets a warm *K'ang*" 憨頭郎睡熱炕, i.e., although he cannot take care of himself, Fate takes care of him.

† A singular example of the variation of Chinese proverbs—if that can be called variation where nearly all the parts are different—is afforded by this saying. It is sometimes explained thus, A wealthy blockhead owned a pear orchard, the produce of which was constantly eaten by the birds. At length a passing traveller suggested to the owner a "happy thought." He might cover his fruit. Accordingly he had little cloth caps made for each individual pear, a means which was found to be a complete protection. Yet for obvious reasons the idea was never extensively utilized. Hence this version of the proverb, "Who, though he commands ready money, will cover his pears with cloth?" 誰有閒錢布罩梨.

belongs to Fire, which would burn the dipper; the North belongs to Water, which would leak through; while the East belongs to Wood, and the West to Metal—for these reasons the skimmer dips up East and West, but does *not* dip up North and South." His Majesty smiled, and commended *Ho Shen's* aptness of reply.

Not only is the conversation of the Chinese full of puns; they are imbedded in the substance of the language itself. In Williams' dictionary, q. v. *shé*, tongue (舌), the circumstance is noted that in the Cantonese dialect this character is pronounced *li*, to profit (利), because the word 賠 *she* of the same tone, means to lose in trade, and has thus an unlucky association. The same authority also mentions that the singular but classical expression *hsing li* 行李, baggage, is regarded as a kind of pun on the more rational term *hsing li* 行理, that is, things that are reasonable or proper for a journey.

Other instances of the same kind are no doubt frequent.\* The homophony of the language seems to breed this kind of paranomasia, error in single words standing by themselves, by a kind of spontaneous generation, as the damp heats of August produce mould, mildew, and mosquitoes, without visible reason.

What, for example, would or could any mortal—whatever his acquaintance with Chinese—understand from hearing that a person's speech is 'a great pear dumpling' (大梨糕) or that he is 'playing the great pear' (耍大梨)? The use of these phrases at Tientsin, is said to have originated as follows: A man acquired the art of making pear-dumplings in a manner which no one could rival, of which, when hawked about the street, he enjoyed a monopoly. One windy day when his sales had been insignificant, some one asked him how much cash he had taken in. He replied that owing to the storm which kept people from going abroad, he had only sold a few tens of thousands of cash worth (a sum sur-

\* What would be thought of an Act of Parliament prohibiting any resident of Middlesex or Kent from building "an ice-house," on the ground that the King of England lives in "a nice house," and would tolerate no rivalry? Yet something not very unlike this is to be found in China. In the *Chinese Recorder* for December, 1882, the late Dr. Dudgeon mentions the circumstance that the people living in the Western Hills behind Peking, are not allowed to store ice (of which an abundant stock could be easily laid up) on the equitable consideration that the character signifying Ice (*ping* 冰) is identical in sound with the character for Soldier (*ping* 兵), so that it might be a source of uneasiness to a government which is in perpetual dread of rebellions, to hear that *ping* (ice-blocks, *q.d.* soldiers) by the ten thousand were in concealment so near the Capital!



passing his real sales for a year), but observed that if the day had been fine, he should have received more than a thousand strings of cash. If the natives of the place are to be believed, this Tientsin Munchausen—who at the age of seventy may still be seen daily trundling his little barrow, and is heard grunting unintelligibly to attract customers—has given a new turn to the local dialect. The expression *ta li hua* (大離話), in current use to denote 'large talk,' in consequence of the unexampled extravagance of this man's language, has come to be reinforced by the phrases *ta li kao* (大梨糕), 'great pear dumpling,' and *shua ta li* (耍大梨), 'playing the great pear,' in allusion to the 'pear talk' from which the saying originated, the oblique reference being still to the *li* (離), meaning distant, i.e., his language is far away\* [from the truth].

Of all Chinese modes of expression, this of word punning is perhaps the easiest for a foreigner to acquire, not only because it differs in no essential respect from what is to be met with in Occidental languages, but because resemblances between different characters of the same sound strike the foreign ear, unaccustomed in his own language to such incessant homophony, much more quickly and more forcibly than they strike natives.† Despite this fact, if one's observation is to be trusted, Chinese word-play receives from the generality of foreigners who speak that language very slight attention, even in works which profess to treat of Chinese.

"How many boats are with you?" was asked of a traveller. "*Yang Chen*," was the compendious reply. Now *Yang Chen* was a distinguished scholar and official who lived A.D. 100, and who was famed for his integrity. It is of him that the familiar incident is

\* The Chinese idiom delights in making its strongest affirmations by means of negations. An immense multitude is merely "not a few" (人不少); a very bad man is simply "not a good man" (不是好人); excellence is merely "not bad" (*pu lai* 不賴 in Peking; *pu nao* in some country dialects); a particularly bright child is "not in the least idiotic" (*i tien* 'pu sha 一點不傻), etc. It is claimed by some that we have a common English slang word, which springs from a Chinese expression involving this *meiosis*, or minimification of what is meant. The Occidental youngster declares that his kite is "bully," meaning that it is "tip-top," "A No. 1." The Chinese more modestly predicates of the article that delights his souls, that it is *pu li* (不離), "not far off."

† Thus the phrase *Hsin chien tzu* (心尖子), "heart's tip," is a kind of pet name with Chinese mothers for their little one. "Stop," cried a house-keeper, "put down my new scissors, and never dare to use them again to trim the lamps! You may have the nurses' *hsin chien tzu* (心尖子), [i.e., the Baby], but my *hsin chien tzu* (新剪子 new scissors) never!"



related, that having been urged to accept a present which was tantamount to a bribe, he refused, as it was brought at night. The donor remonstrated, saying "No one will ever know it." To this *Yang Chen* made the answer which has deservedly immortalized his name: 'Heaven knows it, Earth knows it, you know it, and I know it; how then do you say that no one will know it?' (天知, 地知, 你知, 我知, 何爲無知). (See Mayer's Manual, No 880.) This famous reply of *Yang Chen's* is generally briefly referred to as *Yang Chen's* "Four Knowings" (楊震四知); what was therefore to be understood by the traveller's reply was that he had with him *four boats* (四隻).

Beyond an occasional vague hint that the Chinese are fond of riddles, and other dark sayings, it is rare to find even an allusion to the subject. The twenty volumes of the *Chinese Repository*, for example—a thesaurus of essays upon every imaginable subject connected with China, especially rich in articles devoted to various phases of the Chinese language—contains but a few short lists of proverbs, nearly all of which are printed with no Chinese text. The volume containing the copious Index to all these thousands of teeming pages, comprises references to only three Chinese puns.

Proverbs in which attention is drawn not to the meaning, nor to the sound, but to the composition of a character are not numerous. Two or three specimens (from the *Chinese Repository* and from Doolittle's Hand-book) may suffice.

'The character for Magistrate has two mouths,' *i.e.*, Bribery (官字兩個口). 'The character for Joy has two mouths,' *i.e.*, Quarrels over presents (喜字兩個口). 'The characters for Avarice and Poverty are much alike,' *i.e.*, Avarice tends to Poverty (貪字與貧一樣寫). Plays upon the shapes of characters are readily exhibited in the form of the Antithetical Couplet, as in the following examples. The first is similar to instances already given under the head of Couplets. It is related of the Emperor Ch'ien Lung that on occasion of his travelling abroad to inspect the empire, he propounded to his minister *Ho Shen* (和珅), already mentioned, the following line, to be matched, suggested by the surrounding scenery, 'The smoke envelopes the willows which grow in the tanks' (烟鎖池塘柳). The difficulty of matching the line lies in the circumstance that the radicals of the five characters are the names of the "Five Elements" (五行). Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth

(金木水火土). At the time the Minister was unequal to the emergency, but on reaching a place where the tower of the city gate looking seaward was furnished with cannon, he was enabled to reply as follows: 'The artillery on the city tower commands the sea' (海鎮炮城樓).

In the following couplet the *point* is found in the concluding character of each line: 'When the kingdom is in disorder and its subjects in poverty, if the King does not come to the front, who is Master? When the days are wintry, and the ground cold, if there is not a drop of water, there will be formed no ice.'

國亂民貧, 王未出頭誰作主。  
天寒地冷, 水無一點不成冰。

A wood cutter coming down from the mountain, with his bundle of faggots on his back, met a traveller, and pointing to his burden proposed a line to be matched, in which is comprised a dissection of the fourth and seventh characters, as follows: 'This wood is fuel, and every mountain produces it' (此木是柴山山出). Glancing around the landscape, and seeing the smoke of the evening fires curling upward, the traveller aptly replied: 'By reason of fire is formed smoke, and each evening there is an abundance' (因火成烟夕夕多).

The comparative infrequency of plays upon the shapes of the written character, to be met with in popular proverbs, is far more than compensated by the use made of characters in riddles and other enigmatical sentences, in ways which in alphabetic language are utterly impossible. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the inimitable resources of the Chinese in this direction. One of the simplest forms of puzzles in English consists in paradoxical predicates, quite bewildering to the juvenile mind as,—

"I'm in the Fire, but not in the Flame,  
I'm in the Spinster, but not in the Dame," etc.,

Where the vowel I is the object in question. Or this:—

"The beginning of Eternity, the end of Time and Space,  
The beginning of every End, and the end of every Place."

In Chinese, however, the same clew is far more ingeniously afforded, 'It is in *T'ang* and in *Yü*, but not in *Yao* nor *Shun*; in *Shang* and *Chou* but not in *T'ang* or *Wu*'. 唐虞有, 堯舜無, 商周有, 湯武無, i.e., the K'ou 口 character. 'The feet have it



the legs have it, the shoulders have it, the back has it, and so has the breast; but the head has not, nor has the face, nor the ear, nor the eye, nor yet the hand, nor the fingers', 腳上有。腿上有。肩上有。背上有。胸上亦有。頭上無。面上無。耳上目上無。手上指上俱無, *i.e.*, the *jou* 月 character.

The following sentence serves to exemplify the statement quoted under the head of 'Poems' that 'Wide is the scope of the character I,' and to show that the simplicity of a character is no guarantee that one can comprehend all that is affirmed of it: 'Above it is not above, below it is not below; it cannot be above, but ought to be below,' 上不在上。下不在下。不可在上。且宜在下, *i.e.*, the 一 character as found in composition in the *shung* 上 character is not 'above,' while in the *hsia* 下 character it is not 'below;' in the characters *pu* 不 and *k'o* 可 it is above, while in *ch'ieh* 且 and *i* 宜 it is below.

'No line above, no line below, below it is below, and above it is above,' 上又無畫。下又無畫。下又在下。上又在上, *i.e.*, the *pu* 卜 character has nothing above or beneath it, but in *hsia* 下 character it is at the bottom, and in the *shung* 上 character it is at the top.

'Four mouths and a cross; four crosses and a mouth,' 四個口字。一個十字。四個十字。一個口字, *i.e.*, the *t'u* 圖 and *pi* 畢 characters.

The use of the several component parts of a character in the enigmatical description of the character as a whole, frequently leads to trackless mazes. Here, for example, are four characters forming a sentence, and each character compendiously (and darkly) described by four others; 'Mother and son sleep together; two *yu* characters shoulder to shoulder; a man shoulders his carrying pole; the moon goes by the side of the ear.' 女子同眠。兩又齊肩。人挑扁擔。月去耳邊, *i.e.*, 好雙大腳, 'a pair of great feet' where the moon is made to do duty for the *jou* character, as usually printed exactly like it.

'One moon and then another moon; two moons with half the boundary in common; above the middle of the moons is an arable field, while below there are flowing streams. Six mouths in one house—two mouths incomplete.' 一月復一月。兩月共半邊。上有可耕之田。下有長流之川。六口共一室。兩口不團圓, *i.e.*, the *yung* 用 character.



'There is one mouth, then add another mouth, but do not make the *lū* character. Seen right side up it is the *ssu* character and two points in addition; seen crosswise it is the *mu* character and two strokes more, but it is not the *pei* character,' 有了一個口。再加一個口。莫作呂字看。正了四字多兩點。橫了目字多兩點。莫作貝字看, *i.e.*, the characters *hui* 回 and *mien* 囬。

'Two strokes large, and two strokes small,' 兩畫大兩畫小, *i.e.*, the *ch'in* 秦 character, in which the upper part has two more lines than *ta* 大, great, and the lower part two more than *hsiao* 小, small.

Three characters. 'Two mountains connected but not opposite; two mountains opposite and connected; two mountains but not connected; one branch of literature reaches to the heaven,' 兩山相連不相對。兩山相對又相連。兩山相對不相連。一支文筆插青天, *i.e.*, 王曰叟 the lower part of the last character which is in reality the *yu* 又 radical, is described as if it were *wen* 文 literature, with a long stroke at the top.

In the following examples, the constituent parts of the characters are employed to throw the inquirer off the scent. Two characters. 'A *mu* character with two points added, but it must not be a *pei* character; a *pei* character lacking two points, but it must not be the *mu* character,' 目字加兩點。莫作貝字看。貝字欠兩點。莫作目字看。 The characters are *Ho* 賀 and *Tzu* 資. The first of these is composed of the *mu* 目 character, "with two points added," *i.e.*, *Chia* 加, to add and 'two points,' 兩點. The second character is the *mu* again, 'lacking two points,' *i.e.*, *Ch'ien* 欠, to lack and 'two points,' 兩點.

'If you can, I do not stand up; if you stand up, I cannot; if the middle bar is removed, there is an end of both you and me,' 你可我不立,你立我不可,去了中一橫,罷了你和我, that is, the *Ch'i* 奇 character, assumed to be a copartnership between *Li* 立, to stand, and *K'o* 可, able.

'A literary graduate wrangling with a Buddhist priest; the priest does not become a complete priest, nor does the literary graduate become a complete graduate,' 生員與和尚角口。和尚不成和尚。生員不成生員, *i.e.*, the *Shang* 賞 character, the upper portion of which is the same as the *Shang* in the term *Ho shang* 和尚, priest; the lower part is the *Yuen* 員 character found

in the term *Sheng yuen* 生員, a scholar of a certain grade. The two characters corner on the *K'ou* 口 character (*Chiao k'ou* 角口) and as neither of them can have the mouth to himself, neither is complete.

From this it is but a step to the introduction of other characters, in which the one to be guessed is merely a constituent. 'Four mountains crosswise, two days interlocked; In Wealth it raises its foot, in Embarrassment it raises its head.' 四山縱橫。兩日綢繆。富是他起脚。累是他起頭., i.e., the *Tien* 田 character; which in Wealth 富, is at the *foot*, but in Embarrassment, 累, is at the *head*.

'The three Kings are my elder brothers, the five Emperors my younger brothers; I wished to stop but could not, and by reason of being in the wrong gave offence.' 三王是我兄。五帝是我弟。欲罷而不能。因非而得罪。 The solution of this puzzle is found in the character *Ssu* 四, four, which is the 'elder brother' of three (as in 'three Kings'), and the 'younger brother of five' (as in 'five Emperors'). The words which follow, *Yü pa erh pu neng* 欲罷而不能 are quoted from the Confucian Analects, and refer to the use of *Ssu* 四 in composition. It would like *Yü* 欲 to be a *Pa* 罷, but that cannot be without a *Neng* 能 character, 欲罷而不能. In the last clause, the *Ssu* 四 becomes *Te* 得, guilt, *Tsui* 罪 as soon as the character, *Fei* 非 is added, *Yin fei erh té tsui* 因非而得罪。

The facility with which the descriptions of the characters to be guessed glide from the form of the character or of some of its parts, to the meaning which is conveyed by them, increases the obscurity of what is already sufficiently dark. Thus; 'Cold merely doubles it, and heaps it up, while heat scatters it equally on each side; four in the District city, three in the prefectural city; in the village only within the village, at the market only at the head of the market.' 寒則重重疊疊。熱則四散分流。四個在縣。三個在州。在村裏只在村裏。在市頭只在市頭. i.e., a dot, which in the character *Han* 寒, cold, is doubled in a heap; in the character *Je* 熱, heat, it is spread out on each side equally; it occurs four times in the character *hsien* 縣, District city, but only three times in the Prefectural city, *Chou* 州; in the character *Ts'un* 村, village, it is found inside, while in the character *Shih* 市, market, it stands at the head.



✓ 'When drawn it is round, but when written it is square; in cold weather it is short, and in hot weather long,' 畫時圓。寫時方。寒時短。熱時長。 *i.e.*, *Jih* 日 character, 'sun,' or 'day.'

'One character with nine horizontals, six perpendiculars; were you to ask Confucius, he would guess three days,' 我有一字。九橫六直。問孔夫子。亦猜三日。 *i.e.*, the *Ching* 晶 character, composed of the character for *day* written thrice.

Proper names are readily drawn into service to aid in the composition of a riddle. Thus the object to be represented being stated as 'Ladies' head ornaments,' 'two historical persons' are affirmed to be the material of which they are to be made. The expert guesser is supposed to light upon *Huang Kai* 黃蓋, an individual of the time of the Three Kingdoms, and *Li Pai* 李白, the celebrated T'ang Dynasty poet, as the persons in question, *i.e.*, the *inside white* 裡白 (silver) with a *yellow covering* 黃蓋 (gold).

Phrases and proverbs are also serviceable for riddles, which—like oriole's nests—may be made of whatever is at hand. Thus when many years ago, a Peking temple was purchased for mission headquarters, the circumstance was ingeniously adverted to in a Peking 'lantern riddle,'\* which named the temple, giving as the 'clue,' a common saying, (諺語一句). The 'common saying' proved to be, 'when the gods depart, devils enter,' 神出鬼入。

By a judicious application of these devices almost anything may be derived from almost nothing. Few Chinese characters, for instance, would appear balder and more unpromising of hidden revelations than *mieh* 乜. Yet in the hands of an expert Chinese literary juggler, it becomes as instinct with meaning as a Hebrew vowel point under the manipulation of the Talmudists. For example, the character being given it is required to deduce from it two phrases out of the Four Books. (四書二句). The Reader, who has his Analects at his tongue's end, immediately pronounces these phrases to be 弗如也, and 非也, to be rendered; 'It is not like the *yeh* 也 character, and it is not *yeh*.'

✓ \* The observations made in regard to the enormous number of Antithetical Couplets annually produced in China, apply equally well to Riddles of all varieties. The Empire is hung with lanterns, on the evening of the Feast of that name at the fifteenth of the first moon, and the lanterns are papered with Riddles (燈虎), for the correct solution of which such prizes as a few cash, or a handful of water-melon seeds are offered. Old riddles are regarded with as much contempt for this purpose as a last year's almanac for fixing the feast days (頭年的皇曆, 今年看不的), so that the resources of the Chinese language and literature must be subjected to a severe annual tax.



Or, the process may be reversed, and a character distilled from classical citations in a manner somewhat analogous to the well known array of Bible texts to prove the duty of immediate suicide: "And Judas went out and hanged himself;" "Go thou and do likewise;" "What thou doest, do quickly."

From the following composite text, is to be obtained a single character 子路率爾而對曰。是也。顏淵喟然嘆曰。非也。夫子莞爾而笑曰。誠如是也。直在其中矣。 In these three and thirty characters, we have seven different passages from the Four Books fused together to make a new sense. Here are the quotations; 子路率爾而對曰 (*Lun Yü*, XI. 25.4) 'Tzu-lu hastily and lightly replied;' 是也 (*Lun Yü* XVIII. 6.2) 'Yes, it is.' 顏淵喟然嘆曰 (*Lun Yü* IX. 10. 1.) 'Yen Yüan sighed deeply, and answered;' 非也 (*Lun Yü* XV. 2, 3.) 'No, it is not.' 夫子莞爾而笑曰 (*Lun Yü* XVII. 4.2.) 'The master well pleased and smiling, said.' 誠如是也 (*Mencius*, BK. I. 6.6) 'Such being indeed the case.' 直在其中矣 (*Lun Yü* XIII. 18. 2.) 'Uprightness is to be found in this.' The original meaning of these several passages has no reference to the use here made of them, which is as follows: *Tzu-lu* hastily and lightly spoke up, and said, 'it is the *Yeh* 也 character.' *Yeh Yüan* sighed deeply and replied: 'It is not the 也 character.' The Master well pleased, and smiling, said: 'Sure enough it is like *Yeh*. And so it would be if you put an upright stroke in the middle of it.'

So also *Ya* 亞 character is propounded as yielding a 'common saying,' to wit 安心不善, i.e., "a heart not inclined toward virtue"—'wicked'—an oblique intimation that if a heart is appended to the *Ya* character, it will be not virtuous, 安心不善, i.e., 惡 wicked.

The Chinese Classics furnish an inexhaustible repertory of materials from which may be woven riddles of assorted degrees of complexity. Thus the words *Wen Kuan Chung* 問管仲 are furnished as a clew, and the Reader is expected to remember that these characters, occurring in the *Analects* (BK. XIV., ch. x. 3.) are followed by the words: *Yüeh jen yeh* 曰人也. From these data, a Chinese would discover at once that the *t'a* 他 character is the object to be guessed, being composed of *jen* 亻 and *yeh* 也. Of a different sort is the use made in the following example of the words of *Mencius* (Book I. VII. 4) 何可廢也。以羊易之, denoting that

a certain sacrifice need not fail (because of the lack of an ox), for a sheep could be substituted. The words are given an entirely new meaning by exchanging the signification of the characters for another which arises through an union of their component parts. Thus: In the *Ho* 何 character, the *k'o* 可 is obliterated (*Ho k'o fei yeh*) 何可廢也 and exchanged for a *yang* (*i yang i chih* 以羊易之), by which substitution is obtained a new *yang* 佯 character, which is the answer to the riddle.

To the Western Barbarian the Chinese Essays which are presented at the literary examinations, may appear jejune in style, commonplace in matter, and full of vicious circles, forever taking for granted what they ought to prove, and proving what they ought to take for granted. However just this criticism may be, it is still true that these essays (or *Wen chang* 文章 as they are called) resemble those dwarf trees which the Chinese gardeners are at such pains to produce by artificial treatment. 'The fly,' says the Chinese proverb, 'although a small insect, has all his viscera complete.' (蒼蠅雖小五臟俱全).

In like manner the Chinese essay, although perhaps limited to three hundred characters, is a finished growth in itself. It has a Head, a Neck and Throat, Arms, Viscera, Legs, and Feet. The construction of essays of this sort is the one great business of millions upon millions of Chinese. The mere thought of the aggregate number produced every year is quite fatiguing.

These observations are intended merely to preface a specimen of this kind of composition, which, like the riddle just cited, is a mosaic, but a mosaic of much greater complexity than the last. It is composed of nearly eighty clauses, every one of which is taken from the Four Books, but combined in the general form of an examination essay. The subject is "The Hen-pecked Man," which, though a favorite one for Chinese banter, might not at first sight appear particularly eligible for an essay framed from citations strictly classical. To the Chinese text is appended a list of the places in the Classics where the words quoted may be found.\*

\* The labor which must have been expended upon a mere trifle like this, is best appreciated by considering the trouble involved in untwisting the well woven thread. A scholar of more than twenty years' experience in teaching the Classics, and who was therefore nearly as familiar with them as a Sunday School pupil with the Ten Commandments, occupied almost all his spare time for a week in ascertaining and verifying the references.



## 懼 內 論

有婦人焉 [Conf. Analects, VIII. 20. 3.] 是吾憂也 [An. VII. 3.]  
 夫人不言 [Analects XI. 13. 3.] 吾知免夫 [Analects VIII. 3.]  
 見志不從 [Analects IV. 18.] 則吾豈敢 [Analects VII. 33.]  
 昔者竊聞之 [Menc. Bk. II. Pt. I. 2. 20.] 男女居室 [Me. Bk. v. Pt. I. 2. 1.]  
 和爲貴 [An. I. 12. 1.] 妻子好合 [Doctrine of the Mean xv. 2.]  
 斯爲美 [An. I. 12. 1.] 就之而不見所畏焉 [Menc. Bk. I. Pt. I. 6. 2.]  
 夫何憂何懼 [An. XII. 4. 3.] 何也 [Mencius Bk. v. Pt. II. 6. 1.]  
 巧笑倩兮美目盼兮 ... .. [Analects III. 8. 1.]  
 宜其家人 [Great Learning, IX. 6.] 不亦樂乎 [Analects I. 1. 2.]  
 旣醉以酒旣飽以德 [Mencius Book VI. Part I. 17. 3.]  
 無違夫子 [Me. Bk. III. Pt. II. 2. 2.] 固所願也 [Me. Bk. II. Pt. II. 10. 2.]  
 今也不然 [Menc. Bk. I. Pt. II. 4. 6.] 徵於色 [Me. Bk. VI. Pt. II. 15. 3.]  
 行行如也 [Analects XI. 12. 1.] 其容有蹙 [Menc. Bk. v. Pt. I. 4. 1.]  
 發於聲 [Menc. Bk. VI. Pt. II. 15. 3.] 侃侃如也 [Analects. x. 2. 1.]  
 其言不讓 [An. XI. 25. 10.] 聽其言也 [Menc. Bk. IV. I. Pt. 15. 2.]  
 攸然而逝 [Menc. Bk. v. Pt. I. 2. 4.] 比其反也 [Me. Bk. I. Pt. II. 6. 1.]  
 望之儼然 [Analects XIX. 9.] ... 將入門 [Analects VI. 13.]  
 色勃如也 [Analects x. 3. 1.] 及席 [Analects xv. 41. 1.]  
 蹙蹙如也 [Analects x. 2. 2.] 無慍色 [Analects v. 18. 1.]  
 一則以喜 [Analects IV. 21.] 無喜色 [Analects v. 18. 1.]  
 一則以懼 [An. IV. 21.] 問其僕曰 [Menc. Bk. IV. Pt. II. 24. 2.]  
 女弗能救與 [Analects III. 6.] 吾甚恐 [Menc. Bk. I. Pt. II. 14. 1.]  
 告其妾曰 [Me. Bk. IV. Pt. II. 33. 1.] 若是其甚與 [Me. Bk. I. Pt. I. 7. 17.]  
 如之何 [Analects xv. 15.] 終日不食 [Analects xv. 30.]  
 不可以請 [Menc. Bk. VII. Pt. II. 14. 3.] 終夜不寢 [An. xv. 30.]  
 莫之敢撓 [Me. Bk. VII. Pt. II. 23. 2.] 驕其妻妾 [Me. Bk. IV. Pt. II. 33. 1.]  
 難矣哉 [Analects xv. 16.] 刑于寡妻 [Menc. Bk. I. Pt. I. 7. 12.]  
 未能也 [Doctrine Mean XIII. 4.] 樂爾妻孥 [Doc. Mean xv. 2.]  
 弗如也 [Analects v. 8. 3.] 導其妻子 [Menc. Bk. VII. Pt. I. 22. 3.]  
 已矣乎 [Analects v. 26.] 彼丈夫也 [Menc. Bk. III. Pt. I. 1. 4.]  
 二女女焉 [Menc. Bk. v. Pt. II. 6. 6.] 和樂且耽 [Doc. Mean xv. 2.]  
 我丈夫也 [Menc. Bk. III. Pt. I. 1. 4.] 一妻一妾 [Me. Bk. IV. Pt. II. 33. 1.]  
 戰戰兢兢 [Analects VIII. 3.] ... 嗚呼 [Analects III. 6.]  
 是焉得爲大丈夫乎 [Me. Bk. III. Pt. II. 2. 2.] 雖然 [Me. Bk. v. Pt. I. 3. 3.]  
 予豈若是小丈夫然哉 [Mencius Book II. Part II. 12. 6.]  
 旣不能令又不受命是絕物也 [Mencius Book IV. Part I. 7. 2.]



犯而不校 [Analects VIII. 5.] 不報無道 [Doctrine Mean x. 3.]  
 爲無後也 [Menc. Bk. IV. Pt. I. 26.2.] 天也命也 [Me. Bk. v. Pt. I. 6. 2.]  
 分定故也 ... .. [Mencius Book VII. Part I. 21. 3.]  
 是故君子有終身之憂也 [Mencius Book IV. Part II. 27. 7.]

#### THE HEN-PECKED MAN.

[Announcement of the Theme, 破承題. This forms the Head 頭.] There is a Woman who is to me a cause of sadness. When she does not speak I know enough to keep out of her way. When I see that she is resolved not to yield, what dare I do?

[Development of the Theme, 起講. This forms the Neck, 脖.] A long time ago I heard it said that when man and wife dwell together, harmony is the greatest treasure; happy union with one's wife, this is beautiful. On first approaching her, I saw nothing very terrible about her. What was there to be anxious about? What was there to fear?

[The sentence succeeding the Development of the Theme, 講下句. This is the Throat, 喉.]

What, to be sure?

[The first two Couplets, 前二比. These are the Arms 對股.] The pretty dimples of her artful smile, the well defined black and white of her eye! She harmonizes well with the entire family. Is not this pleasure? Then when she is happy with wine, when she is full to repletion with virtue, she does not disobey her husband. This is what one would wish.

[The turning point of the Discussion, 先反後正.] Now the real state of things is quite otherwise.

[The central Couplets, 中數比. These are the Viscera, 腹.] It is manifest in her looks, in her bold and soldier-like manner, for her countenance is discomposed; it is exhibited in her tones, for she speaks in a decided and straightforward way, and her language concedes nothing to any one. On listening to her words I gladly escaped, and when I returned, I gazed upon her severely. Just as I was entering the door, her countenance appeared to change. When I reached the mat I was ill at ease. If there was no displeasure in her countenance, that was to me an occasion for joy. If there was no joy in her countenance, that was to me an occasion of fear. I asked the servants saying, 'Can you not rescue me from her? I am in extreme terror.' I spoke to my concubine

and said, 'Is it so bad as that? There is then no help for it.' I have been the whole day without eating, and I could not ask. I have been all night without sleep, and dared not come near her. To behave proudly to my wife and concubine, this is difficult indeed. To make my wife imitate my conduct, I cannot do it! To enjoy pleasure with my wife, I am not equal to it! As for instructing my wife, *that* is all over! Other husbands have married two women, and have had delightful and enduring harmony. I am a husband with one wife and one concubine, but I am apprehensive and fearful. Alas! is this being a worthy husband? Nevertheless, I am not surely like one of those unworthy husbands!

[Final Couplets, 末二比. These are the Legs, 腿.] Not able to command her, not willing to receive orders from her, cut off from all intercourse with her, offended against, and yet not contending, not revenging unreasonable conduct, lest I should have no posterity.

[Concluding sentences 煞尾數句. These are the Feet, 脚.] It is from Heaven! It is Fate! It is definitely appointed by Destiny! Thus it is that the superior man has a life-long anxiety.

To the view of the Outer Barbarian, these modes of dealing with the Chinese character (however common among the Chinese themselves) may appear somewhat intricate, and a dawning doubt of their possible practical utility may, perchance, intrude itself upon his mind. All that has been already instanced is, however, merely the elementary portion of the theory and practice of Chinese Riddles, the primary Arithmetic of linguistic enigmas, extending, let us say, to the end of Compound Numbers and Vulgar Fractions. There lies beyond a Wilderness of Sin, in which are to be found Square and Cube Roots, Differential and Integral Calculuses, Fluxions, Surds (Absurds) and Quaternions. Of plunging into this terrible *terra ignota* we have not the least intention. We will merely beg the indulgent Reader, too long beguiled from his proper route, to contemplate three remaining specimens of Cretan-like labyrinths.

The possible resolutions of single characters, having apparently run low, new forms of higher complexity had to be invented. These are of many varieties. One of them is known as the 'Double Door Rule' (重門格). This means that the characters to be found will be discovered only by dissecting other characters. Take



for example, the words 往來無白丁, 'Among those who come and go there is no person without official rank.' The phrase to be sought, we are told, is from the Four Books and is to be guessed out on the 'Double Door Plan' (打四書一句要按重門格猜法). The clew lies in our former acquaintance, to wit the words *wen kuan ch'ung* 問管仲, and these characters being taken apart, yield the following: 門口个个官中人, i.e., 'within the doorway each one is in the ranks of officials,' which is equivalent to the proposition with which we began.

Among other devices for the distillation of enigmatical darkness, are the 'Rolling up the Screen Rule' (捲簾格), in which the characters are read from the bottom to the top; the 'Duck and Drake Rule,' (鴛鴦格) in which one limb of a familiar couplet having been guessed out, the solution of the riddle is found, not in this half of the couplet but in the *other* one (the two being as intimately associated as Duck and Drake, to wit, Husband and Wife); and the hanging and unhangng of Bells.

Immediately on his entrance upon his studies, the student of Chinese becomes aware that many characters are used in different tones, with different senses, the distinction being indicated, if at all, by little circles at the corners of the characters as in the case of the *ch'ung* 重 character in the last example, ordinarily read *chung*. These circles are enigmatically spoken of as bells; to put them on is to hang a bell (繫鈴格), to remove the circles is to unhang them (解鈴格).

Now there is a structure known in Chinese history as the *Hung Ching Lou* 宏景樓 or Tower of Expansive Prospect. These three characters are furnished, and from them is to be extracted by the bell hanging process, a sentence from the Four Books (打四書一句要按繫鈴格猜法). It is superfluous to suggest to the Reader that the four characters 有三重焉 from the Doctrine of the Mean, afford the mystic clew. This Tower, as we all know, existed in three stories. We now hang our 'Bell' upon the *chung* 重 character, and the sentence then reads: 有三重焉, 二有三層焉, i.e., there are three stories, Q.E.D.

Once more, the *Hsün* 堦 character is dealt out from which is to be cork-screwed, according to Bell *unhanging* rules, the name of an individual in the *Tso Chuan*, or commentary on the *Ch'un Ch'iu* (打左傳人名一個要按解鈴格猜法). The two words



of the key (in the discovery of which we are doubtless anticipated by the Reader) are of course 伯樂 *Po Yüeh*.

The *Hsün* is an anomalous sort of musical instrument said to have been made of porcelain, and shaped like an egg, with six or seven holes, blown through the apex, and producing a whistling sound. Now the prerogative of piping upon this perforated porcelain egg was limited by statute to elder brothers, while younger brothers were obliged to put up with blowing the *Ch'ih* (簫) which—if the composition of the character is any guide—was formed of bamboo and made a noise like a tiger. Every one will immediately recall the passage in the Books of Odes which says: 'Brothers are called *Po* and *Chung*; the elder is *Po*, and the musical instrument which he plays, is called the *Hsün*; the younger is named *Chung*, and he plays upon the *Ch'ih*.' (詩經云伯氏吹壎仲氏吹簫).

This division of musical labor naturally and appropriately led to the use of the *Hsün* and *Ch'ih* characters, in the sense of elder and younger brothers ('blowing music' being presumptively the chief employment of brothers). The *Hsün* character 壎 with which we began, is now resolved into *Po Yüeh* 伯樂, i.e., the elder brother's musical instrument. But by the terms of our inquiry, we were to take off the bell. This done, *Po Yüeh* 伯樂 is changed into *Po lao* 伯樂.\* Now by reading carefully through the entire *Tso Chuan*, it is ascertained that there is no *Po Lao* 伯樂 there to be found, there is a *Po Lao* 伯勞, and this character is therefore the one of which we are in search.

It is not, perhaps, to be wondered at that a nation upon which has devolved the task of constructing and resolving riddles of this sort, should have had less leisure than could have been wished for original thinking, not to speak of investigations in Natural Science.

It is an example of Chinese fondness for involved modes of expression adapted to the eye, as well as to the ear, that they have books—in some cases amounting to volumes of considerable size—called *Ts'ang T'ou Shih* (藏頭詩) in which the object is to weave together verses, at the same time concealing the point of departure (*ts'ang t'ou* 藏頭). What is apparent is a mere jumble of miscellaneous characters, but to him who holds the key they afford

\* This is an unusual sound of 樂. [In *Po Yüeh* (伯樂) 樂 should not have a little ring, *yüeh* being the original sound of the character. C. G.]

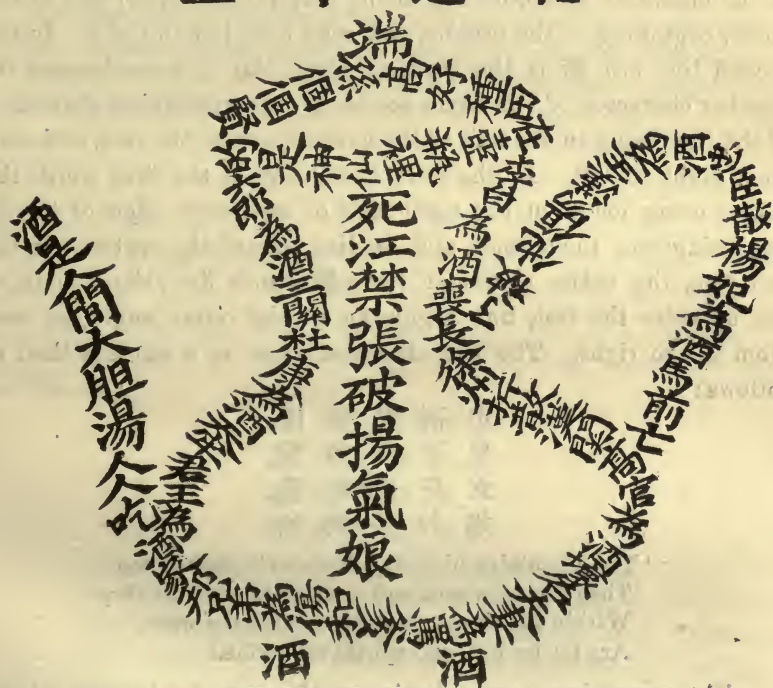




A very slight inspection makes it evident that puzzles of this sort immeasurably surpass anything that can be accomplished in English by the Rebus, Acrostic, Anagram, Square word puzzles, etc., etc., or in any other way whatsoever. († P. 172.) In the item of Linguistic Labyrinths the Chinese would probably have carried off the principal Gold Medal at the Tower of Babel, or at any other International Exposition since.

An adequate idea of a Chinese Character Puzzle of this sort is only to be gained by actual inspection. In order to facilitate this object, one of them is reproduced in the following cut. It is called The Universe in a Wine Pitcher, and consists of more than an hundred characters, disposed so as to represent a Pitcher, with cover, handle and spout. The only guide to reading it aright is conveyed in the announcement that the text is to be arranged in lines of seven characters each (七言詩); and that the point of departure is from the words *Chiu shih jen chien* (酒是人間起).

## 壺 中 造 化





Each of these items of information, however, turns out to be inaccurate, for upon a more minute examination (and by the aid of a dim sort of key, 讀法), we ascertain that the lid of the pot is a verse by itself, in the five character meter (五言詩), entirely disconnected from the remaining stanzas. The seven character lines, twelve in number, contain a representation of the mischiefs caused by wine. They begin with general statements, which are supported by particular historical examples and conclude by returning to generalities. The whole device is almost exactly analogous to the temperance legend often printed in the shape of a decanter beginning:—

“There was an old decanter,  
And its mouth was gaping wide.  
The ruby wine had ebbed away,  
And left its crystal side.”

In order to read the verse which is concealed in the lid, it is necessary first to dissect the character at the top (*tuan* 端), which is made to do quadruple duty. In the first line, *shan* 山 is the initial character, the other four being found in the upper half of the cover, beginning at the middle, and read from left to right. In the second line, *erh* 而 is the starting point, but it is exchanged for another character of the same sound, 兒, the remaining characters of the line being in the half of the cover opposite the last, and read from right to left. In the next line *li* 立 is the first word, the others being found in the right half of the lower edge of the lid beginning from the outside and reading toward the center. In the last line, the entire character *tuan* 端 stands first, the remainder are opposite the last, but beginning at the outer angle are read from left to right. The five character verse, as a whole is then as follows:

山 高 好 種 田。  
兒 孫 個 個 賢。  
立 在 壺 瓶 裏。  
端 的 是 神 仙。

‘The mountains high, the fields well planted too,  
Then virtuous sons and grandsons come to view;  
Within the pitcher which contains the wine,  
Are fairies hid, and spirits all divine.’

The remaining verses begin at the outer extremity of the spout, and are as follows:—

酒是人間大胆湯。

人人吃 [Upper end of handle] 了被他傷

漢王爲酒忠臣散。

楊妃爲酒馬前亡。

[Left side of Pitcher, top.] 六郎爲酒三關 [Center line] 死。

[Right side, top.] 李白爲酒喪長 [Center] 江。

[Left side, middle.] 杜康爲酒天牢 [Center] 禁。

[Right side, middle.] 徐州拆散漢關 [Center] 張。

[Left side, near spout.] 君王爲酒家邦 [Center] 破。

[Right side, at handle.] 高官爲酒壞名 [Center] 揚。

[Left side, bottom.] 兄弟爲酒傷和 [Center] 氣。

[Right side, bottom.] 夫妻爲酒罵爹 [Center] 娘。

'Wine is the magic potion which stirs to valorous deeds,  
But he who takes it needs must bear the ill to which it leads;  
Thus *Han Wang's* loyal ministers were lost because of wine,  
Through wine the Princess *Yang* was slain along the battle's line;  
Six Brothers at the *San Kuan*, through wine were overthrown,  
Through wine came *Li Po's* banishment afar to parts unknown.  
To dungeon wine brought *Tu K'ang*, so too by wine's intrigue  
Was *Hsu Chou* lost by *Chang Fei*, which broke the Brother's League;  
By wine have Princes' house and state to ruin oft been brought,  
And high Officials' lofty fame through wine has come to nought,  
Through wine fraternal concord will turn to mutual hate,  
And curses on the parent's heads their children imprecate.'

Beside the *Ts'ang Tou Shih*, or Verses with the Hidden Head, there are many other varieties of Chinese Cryptogram. In the Analytical Cryptogram, for example, the explanation depends upon resolving certain characters, an oblique description of which is given, into their constituent parts (拆字).

Of this style of composition the following verses are an example:—

耗國因寶木。

刀兵點水工。

縱橫三十六。

所據在山東。

'By precious wood the realm was brought to waste,  
And drops of water near the work were placed;  
Sword-bearing soldiers thirty six by count,  
The spot they seized was eastward of the mount.'

The first two of these lines are quite innocent of any meaning in themselves, but each gives a hint of a character which is to be



guessed from them. *Pao Mu* (寶木) is intended to suggest the *Sung* 宋 character, which is composed of 宀 a cover, and *mu* 木 wood. The former character is exchanged for *pao* 寶, because it is usually called the *pao kai* (寶盖), since it forms a covering for the precious contents of the *pao* character. In the second line, the words *tien shui kung* (點水工) indicate that water is to be placed before the *kung* (工) character, thus constituting it *Chiang* 江. This gives *Sung Chiang* (宋江), the leader of the band of robbers in the *Liang Shan Po* (梁山泊) to whom reference has been already made.

The Wind, Flowers, Snow, and Moonlight, 風, 花, 雪, 月, in a multitude of Chinese expressions, are familiar emblems of the insubstantial and the evanescent.\* In the following verse each of these characters is darkly described, as where the outer strokes of the character for Phoenix are called the 'Nest' of the 'Bird,' 鳥 which flying away, leaves space for the Insect 虫 thus forming the character for Wind, 風. The other characters are dissected, without alteration.

虫入鳳窩飛去鳥。  
 七人頭上長青草。  
 大雨下在橫山上。  
 半个朋友不見了。

'The Insect enters the Phoenix nest, the Bird from thence has flown; 風鳳  
 Seven Mortals fixed till on their heads the dark green grass has grown, 花  
 A copious Rain is falling there where a Mountain stands on end; 雪  
 But the strangest sight of all is this, to see only half of a Friend!' 月

It is related of the Emperor Ch'ien Lung that, when on one of the pilgrimages in which he much delighted, he stopped for refreshment at a temple in Chiang Nan. Here there was a literary graduate of the second grade (Chü Jen) teaching a school, who proved to be such a sensible person that the Emperor was pleased, and wrote a Tablet (匾) for the temple, as follows: 虫二 which to the uninitiated might seem to denote 'Two Insects.' Nothing, however, could be farther from the intention of His Majesty than this.† What he really meant (as the intelligent Reader has already divined) was a reference to the Empire, which in his time was

\* As, for example, in the common sayings: 'The bright Moon in the water, Flowers in a mirror,' (水中明月鏡中花). 'How long will the Flower retain its beauty?' (花開能有幾日紅).



greater than ever before, and was to the Imperial eye boundless, like the range of the Wind, or the effulgence of the Moon. This postulate once granted, it was easy, by a common figure of speech, to represent the Imperial domain by the terms Wind and Moon, and hence when the vastness of the Empire was hinted at to call in brief, 'The Wind and the Moon—no boundaries' 風月無邊. This, we repeat, was His Majesty's meaning. But instead of saying so, as an inferior order of mind would have done, he simply gives the kernel, and rejects the husk—to wit the Insect (虫) character,—to intimate that this is the Wind (風) character '*without boundaries*,' and the character signifying two (二) to suggest the Moon (月), also '*without boundaries*.'

Yet however plain a statement may be, it is always possible for the 'unlearned and unstable' to 'wrest' it. So in this case we are not much surprised to learn that although when the Emperor wrote 'Two Insects' plainly meaning 'A boundless Empire,' a school of literal interpreters arise who insist upon sticking by the text, which said 'Two Insects' that is, as they explained, Two Serpents, a Black one (青蛇), and a White one (白蛇), in the existence of which and in their endowment with supernatural powers for evil, millions of Chinese are said to have a deeply rooted faith—a faith, that is to say, rooted deeply in the two characters 虫 二, traced by the hand of an Emperor!

Another variety of Chinese Cryptogram, may be described as the *Exegetical*, where the lines given do not contain the Characters sought, nor their component roots, but merely describe them, as in the following verse:—

梧桐木上掛絲絛。  
兩國相爭何用刀。  
千年古事他知道。  
萬里山河妙手描。

The explanation is to be found in a familiar phrase of four characters, *Ch'in, Ch'i, Shu, Hua*, 琴, 棋, 書, 畫, i.e., Lutes, Chess, Books, Drawings, as in the following translation:—

'Upon the Wu T'ung's famous wood are silken cords stretched tight;  
Two kingdoms wage a mutual strife, yet use no swords to fight;  
A thousand years of history to him are clearly known;  
Ten thousand miles of hills and streams his skillful hand has shown.'

In another form of cryptographic notation, the meaning is conveyed by an Acrostic. In this way the following verse conceals the name of *Lu Chün* / the rebel (盧俊義反), who was associated with *Sung Chiang*, previously mentioned:—

蘆花叢裏一扁舟。  
 俊杰皆從此地游。  
 義士手提三尺劍。  
 反身定斬逆臣頭。

‘Amid the reeds and rushes, there lies a little boat,  
 From hence come all the brave men, the famous men of note;  
 The Officer of government, the sword he bears is just,  
 He turns himself, the traitor's heads are rolling in the dust.’

It is said that *Han Shih Chung* [韓世忠 see Mayer's Manual No. 154, a.] who pursued the Tartar chief *Chin Wu Chu* (金兀朮) lost him in the recesses of the Western Lake (西湖). The hiding place was such an unlikely one for the concealment of so powerful a foe, that the Sung Emperor's soldiers quite overlooked it. A Buddhist priest who was consulted on the subject unwilling to commit himself by giving direct information, enounced the following lines which, through the initial characters of each line, intimated that he who sought the hidden enemy should to the ‘Old Dragon’ Den Go, (老龍窩走).

老邁年殘領大兵。  
 龍爭虎鬪逞英雄。  
 窩巢逆匪全受命。  
 走馬消氛定太平。

‘The Old commander, full of years, his numerous soldiers leads;  
 The Dragon\* wars, the Tigers fight, and show their martial deeds;  
 The Den of bandits all obey the general's high behest,  
 Then Go with horse, disperse the Thieves, and put the land at rest.’

#### PARODIES.

An example has been already given of the facility with which, by slight verbal changes, the meaning of an Antithetical Couplet may be reversed. Parodies of various kinds are common in Chinese, a few specimens of which may serve as further illustrations of ‘linguistic diversions.’

\* The “Dragon” is the Emperor, and the Tigers are his Generals.



It has been already observed that the Chinese are fond of bantering descriptions of the Henpecked Man (懼內的). One of the numerous anecdotes relating to this individual embodies an example of Parody. A poor scholar who happened to have an educated wife, was kept in the most abject terror by her severity. Whenever he had incurred her high displeasure, he was obliged, in the middle of the night, to kneel by her bed until such time as she saw fit to release him.\* Upon one of these occasions she was pleased to offer him his freedom upon condition of his citing from a volume of Odes with which they were familiar, a verse which with adaptations should suit his present situation. If, however, he failed, he was to remain kneeling indefinitely. The lines which he selected were as follows:—

'When clouds are thin, and the wind is light, toward noon of a spring-like day,

I walk mid flowers and willow trees, and over the stream I stray;

My heart-felt joy is little known to those who think, forsooth,

That I am stealing leisure time to imitate idle youth.'

雲淡風輕近午天。傍花隨柳過前川。

時人不識余心樂。將謂偷閑學少年。

The following is the revised version, which secured a remission of the husband's punishment:—

'The clouds are thin, the wind is light

And the hour is just the middle of night;

The objects which the poet descried,

Those flowers and willows are all outside;

And little they know of my good Spouse

Who think I'm practicing New Year's bows!'

雲淡風輕半夜天。傍花隨柳在外邊。

時人不識余心苦。將謂偷閑學拜年。

The following stanza embodies the Chinese view of the value of learning:—

The Emperor honors the brave of heart,

Then practice composition's art;

The worth of other pursuits is small,

The study of books excels them all.

\* The 'kneeling punishment' (罰跪) would seem to be a well recognized mode of enforcing their authority in use by Chinese Xanthippes, for the proverb says: 'The Henpecked man is obliged to kneel with a lamp on his head [to make it certain that he does not stir] until the morning watch' (怕婆頂燈跪到五更).



天子重英豪。文章教爾曹。  
萬般皆下品。惟有讀書高。

The shameful greed of gain which in the later reigns of the present dynasty has degraded the civil service of China into a national reproach, is deservedly satirized in a new reading of these lines—a 'reversed version' which has attained general proverbial circulation:—

The Emperor prizes his sycee,  
And nothing for Literature cares he;  
All other callings now rank first  
The study of books is last and worst.

天子重元寶。文章不要了。  
萬般皆上品。惟有讀書精。

Among other verses of *Shen Tung* are the following, which are called the Four Joys:—

The welcome Rain by which long drought is brought to a sudden end.  
Afar from home to catch the sight of an intimate old time Friend.\*  
The Bridal Chamber's flowery torch upon one's wedding night;  
One's Name in the list of the Graduates exposed to public sight.

#### 四 喜

久旱逢甘雨。他鄉遇故知。  
洞房花燭夜。金榜題名時。

The parody in this instance consists in adding two characters to each line, by which the meaning is entirely reversed:—

久旱逢甘雨——雹子。  
他鄉遇故知——討賬。  
洞房花燭夜——賣女。  
金榜題名時——作夢。

The dismal drought was stopped by Rain.  
—With ruinous hail stones in its train;  
When far from home a Friend I met,  
—Who promptly dunned for an ancient debt,  
The Bridal Chamber's flowery light,  
—But the bride is a kind of hermaphrodite;  
Successful scholarship—joy supreme,  
—But that was only a morning dream.

Whoever learns to write the English language, becomes aware of the fact that in order to convey a precise meaning, punctuation

\* In Mr. Scarborough's volume the first two lines of this Ode are quoted (No. 2492), and are made to do duty as a "Weather" proverb.

and the arrangement of clauses are matters of prime importance. Teachers illustrate this truism by such examples as that of the countryman who was mystified by the information that an Interest Table which he found in a merchant's office, was "a rule for counting houses" (counting-houses); and that of the member who apologized for unparliamentary language in the ambiguous words, "I said he was a liar it is true and I am sorry for it." The Chinese language offers an unlimited field for instances of this sort. Thus a story is told of a father and his two sons who lived in a place where the people were fond of litigation. At the close of the year they agreed each to utter some felicitous sentence, hoping thus to give a favorable turn to the next twelve months. The father first spoke as follows (今年好), 'May this be a good year.' The elder son continued (晦氣少), 'May unpropitious influences be few!' The younger son added (不得打官司), 'May we get on without a lawsuit!' These eleven characters were then written out and pasted up in the main room, where the good luck, which it was hoped they would cause, might be multiplied by the perusal of them by every one who entered. The next morning the son-in-law came to pay his respects and was much amazed to see before him two strips, the first with five characters and the second with six, as follows (今年好晦氣), 'May we have this year plenty of ill luck!' (少不得打官司) 'May we get an abundance of lawsuits!'

The story just cited occurs in a tiny volume styled 'Laugh and be better' (笑得好), the tales in which are adapted to expose to ridicule sundry weaknesses and vices of human nature, which it is hoped can be amended by satire. In this case the superstitious folly of those who expect a few sentences of 'felicitous words' to exert a beneficial influence upon their lives, is the object aimed at. In another somewhat similar story, the Sons-in-law, who will be no gainers by their Father-in-law's expenditure on his new house, offer their congratulations in a tone which clearly exposes the utter selfishness of their natures.

Old Mr. Yao he built a house, a mansion new and wide and tall,  
His Sons-in-law together came, to pay congratulations all;  
Quoth he; 'The building of this house, with constant trouble has  
been (wrought)

And all this anxious toil and care I do not wish to spend for naught,



So on this glad and happy day, my worthy Sons-in-law you each  
Shall now in turn enunciate some timely and auspicious speech.'

'This house of yours,' said number One, 'is not indeed devoid of merit,  
But you've no Son, so when you die pray where's the person to  
inherit!'

'Twas most expensive—this same house,' said number Two 'and that  
is plain,

So when you sell for less than cost, the loss will cause you keenest pain,'

'Oh! sell at once, and bear the loss,' said number Three, 'and fate  
forestall,

Lest fire consume it utterly, and you have nothing left at all!'

岳翁新蓋一樓房。三個女婿賀喜到中堂。

岳翁說、每人必須說句吉祥的話。

也不枉我操心受累的忙了這一場。

大婿說、丈人的樓房雖然好。

只怕你死後沒有兒子誰承當。

二婿說、蓋此樓房錢不少、若要轉賣賠了錢必定疼的荒。

三婿說、我看也是急早賠錢轉賣了好。

倘若失了火燒你个片瓦無存、落个精打光。

Every one is aware of the Chinese habit of flourishing one finger in the air, or drawing it across the palm of the hand, to indicate the method in which a character is written. To a foreigner this appears no doubt about as legible as an inscription on water, but to the Chinese, accustomed to remember characters by the number and order of their strokes, it is almost as precise as a pen and ink notation. Somewhat analagous to this method for the eye, is a mode of suggesting a character to the ear by a description of its composition. Thus an extremely obstinate person is spoken of as 'three drops of water, and a girdle' (三點水, 加一個帶字) that is, *Chih* (滯) obstructive. In the same way a stupid man, *Hun* (渾) is obliquely described as 'three drops of water and a general' (三點水, 加一個軍字). Most such circumlocutions are probably used in an unfavorable sense, yet there are many exceptions. Thus, a man who is number four (行四) in a family, is called a *Fang-tzu-pien-rh* (方字邊兒), on the equitable consideration that a square has *four* corners, or that the character for four (四) is itself square! The same expression is also applied to four articles of any kind.



## THE DISSECTION OF CHINESE CHARACTERS.

The peculiar structure of the Chinese language gives to the business of analyzing characters a place to which nothing in alphabetic languages corresponds. The construction of anagrams has always been a favorite amusement, in civilized lands, and at times considerable ingenuity is exhibited in this form. In Paris, for instance, half a century ago, there was a mania for puzzles of this kind, and among others the name of the First Consul was treated in the following singular fashion, the seven letters composing Napoleon's name, forming a Greek anagram, thus:—

Napoleon  
Apoleon  
Poleon  
Oleon  
Leon  
Eon  
On

This, the Parisians affirmed, was a collection of Greek words exclusively, forming a Greek sentence in the following order: Napoleon on oleon leon eon apoleon poleon, signifying in English 'Napoleon being the lion of his people, was marching on destroying the cities.'

There is reason to believe that a collection of all the anagrams ever heard of in the English language, would entirely pale its ineffectual fires in presence of the number which could be collected in Chinese by the analysis of characters, not only on account of the practically infinite range of material in that language, but because the development of these results has in China been for ages carried to the point of a fine art.

Among the numerous methods of forecasting the future in use by the Chinese, that which depends upon the dissection of characters (拆字) occupies a prominent place.\* Of this process some

\* The following lines are said to have been handed down for about seventeen centuries. They refer to the prosperous life and violent death of *Tung Cho* (董卓 See Mayer's Manual No. 687) who was assassinated A. D. 192.

千里草，何青青。十日卜，不得生。

A thousand *li* of grass—how green it is!

Ten days of divination—he can not survive.

The explanation is found in the characters composing the name of the individual referred to:—*Ch'ien* 千, *Li* 里, and *Tsao* 草, compose the *Tung* 董, character; *Shih* 十, *Jih* 日, and *Pu* 卜, form the *Cho* 卓, character.

examples have been already adduced in a previous section, yet a word in reference to this class of fortune-tellers may not be out of place in this connection.

The father of the art is vaguely affirmed to be one *Shao K'ang Chieh* (邵康節) of the T'ang Dynasty, and he can certainly boast a multitude of disciples. The modes of operation vary widely. Some fortune-tellers are provided with a stock of 'selected characters,' numbered from thirty to sixty. By the skilful manipulation of generations of fortune-tellers these symbols exhibit the hidden secrets of human life, as a *papier-maché* model in the hands of an expert demonstrator of Anatomy, displays the muscular, nervous, and circulatory systems of the human body. The customer selects his character, which is sometimes done by lot, by means of sticks in a bamboo tube, and the significance is made known by the fortune-teller in accordance with the occult rules of the guild; others permit the inquirer after his fate to present a character of his own choice, and here the prophet's skill has its widest field. The professors of this branch of their art are not unlike those ancient Sophists who held themselves ready to discourse to a Greek audience upon any subject whatever, for any length of time.

A certain scholar, who like many of his class presented a singular compound of skeptical credulity, consulted a fortune-teller of this kind, as to the result of an impending and much dreaded examination. The character drawn was *Ch'uan* (串), meaning to connect. The fortune-teller promptly pronounced the character most auspicious, for it is composed of the *Chung* (中) character doubled, which, read in one of its tones, means *to attain*. The prophecy therefore was that the scholar would pass a splendid examination taking in fact a "double first."

A spectator, struck with the felicity of the prognostication, thereupon came forward to hear his fortune, and, as if by accident, contrived to choose the same character as the scholar, hoping to hoodwink Fate into an equally favorable response. Now a man who spends his life in a promiscuous Chinese crowd, especially when his living depends upon the quickness of his wits, has those wits sharpened to a surprising degree of acumen. The fortune-teller at once took in the situation, and disappointed his client by announcing that the augury was of the very worst, pointing out that this character *Ch'uan* (串) with a heart appended



(患) means 'calamity,' which showed that fate was against him because his *heart* was bad!

In this celerity of adaptation to the circumstances of the moment, the Chinese fortune-teller rivals his brethren the 'confidence men,' and other sharpers in Western lands.\* When no customer presents himself, the shrewd practitioner, who reads faces as he reads characters, between the lines, frequently hails some passer-by with the announcement that he perceives by his countenance that Fortune has something in store for him. Nine men out of ten would like to know what Fortune has in store for them and the individual addressed, being one of the nine, and finding himself politely accosted by a gentleman of a suave manner, calls a halt.

Upon this the dissector of characters whips out a slip of paper, upon which is recorded the statement, 'Last night while at an inn I computed the Future, and ascertained that to-day at this place I should meet YOU!' Now of every ten persons whom a sagacious fortune-teller would think it worth while in this way to hail, nine would not stop to consider that for a fortune-teller to have calculated the preceding evening at an 'inn' that he should meet Somebody who could be addressed as 'You,' was no remarkable sign of fore-knowledge. Nor would they reflect that that same 'You' would be equally applicable to every other individual of the human race who happened to pass that way, just as every day is 'To-day.' Thus he halts and has his fortune told, and this is very likely the means of gathering a crowd.

If, as often happens, a crowd should collect, and no one offers to have his fortune explained, the operator engages in casual conversation with the first man whose eye he catches, and asks some question, however trivial as, for example, 'How old were you when you married?' The person addressed, taken by surprise, carelessly replies, perhaps, that at that time he was thirty. Then another

\* After the above was written, the writer met a strolling Professor of the character-dissecting business, who was asked for a specimen of his method. The character which happened to come first to hand was *ku* 古 'Ancient,' which the fortune-teller (who had read some Christian books) promptly explained to mean that the proclamation *K'ou* (口) mouth, of Cross, *Shih* (十) had been from 'ancient' times! A second character, which chanced to be *Yang* (樣) a pattern, was pointed out, when he observed that the 'Virtue-top' (羊), i.e., the upper part of the character *Shan* (善) 'Virtue' indicated that 'Virtue' was 'eternal' (永), and that this desirable state of things prevailed in the East (the direction of the country from which the writer came) as was evidenced by the fact that Wood (木) 'belongs to' the East!



inquiry is addressed to another person, and so on. Nothing is lost, nothing is forgotten. Each sentence casually dropped is a trolling fish-hook and each hook is admirably adapted to catch a foolish fish.

By-and-by the fortune-teller with ostentatious candor makes a proposition to the crowd. Let some one, any one since all are total strangers to him, give to the crowd the outline statistics of his family, the dates of his birth, number of his relatives, etc., etc. As soon as this shall have been done, the fortune-teller agrees to produce from his bundle of computed fortunes (all of them wrought out 'last night at an inn') one which shall in every smallest particular correspond to this personal history. In proportion to the number and minutiae of the particulars adduced, is the improbability that it can be matched at a moment's notice by a computation prepared 'last night at an inn.' The curiosity of the crowd is thus excited, and the specification of details begins, the fortune-teller meantime standing idly by, with his hands in his sleeves (袖手旁觀).

But the sleeve of the fortune-teller resembles the one worn at that famous game of enchre by his countryman Ah Sin. Like Oceanic Han and Tidal Su, the interpreter of fates is a rapid penman. Within that capacious sleeve are concealed a little ink-slab, and a stubbed pen, with which are taken swift but accurate notes of the items given by the witness. When the latter has concluded, the fortune-teller by a skilful sleight of hand, affects to shuffle over a huge pile of memoranda, and select, of course, the one of which the ink is barely dry. This he holds up, and reads to the crowd, some of whom can confirm its accuracy by their knowledge of the character, and all of whom are struck with the undeniable accuracy of the calculation, made though it was 'last night in an inn.'

If none of these methods is adopted—for the devices are legion—resort is perhaps had to sentences previously framed, and which can be made susceptible of double or even opposite meanings (雙觀語) like the *Aio te Romanos vincere posse* of antiquity. With this in view, slips have been prepared beforehand. Suppose the fortune-teller, as before, offers to produce from his bundle a computation showing which one of an individual's parents had first died. When the fact has been stated to the crowd, the fortune-teller exhibits the result of the calculation made 'last night at an inn,' in the following Delphic words 父在母先亡. If the mother died first, the fortune-teller in reading makes a pause after

the second character, the meaning then being, 'While the Father was living, the Mother first died.' If otherwise, he lays emphasis on the fourth character, 'The Father died before the Mother.' If it be entirely uncertain whether the parents are both living, only one living, or both dead, and the fortune-teller has agreed to prove that he made the calculation accurately 'last night at an inn,' he produces the following magic legend:—

父母雙全你不能傷一個。

If one parent only is alive, the characters are read thus, 'Father and Mother both alive—this is impossible for you, who mourn for one of them.' If neither of them are dead, the pause is transferred to the fourth character, 'Father and Mother are both alive—you cannot mourn for either of them.' But if both parents prove to have died, the fortune-teller with thumb and finger dexterously snips off the two final characters, and the remainder are thus read, 'Father and Mother both alive—this is impossible for you—mourn!'

The irrefragible proof thus given of the powers of insight of the fortune-teller, have by this time perhaps persuaded the countryman of whom a question was asked a few momets before, to come forward and have his fate read. The crafty seer informs his customer that his horoscope indicates that his early settling (少運) was bad, that he was poor, that his parents died early, etc., etc. All this the fortune-teller inferred with unerring accuracy from the discovery made in advance that the man was not married until he was thirty years of age, a circumstance which in ninety-nine cases out of an hundred, would be due to poverty, or to trouble in the family. His future fate (老運) would naturally be made as favorable as possible, to contrast with his early misfortunes.

It is not fortune tellers alone who profit by the readiness with which the component parts of Chinese characters may be arranged, and rearranged, and by the extreme facility with which a new meaning may be read into a character, or phrases of a sentence. The process here indicated is one by means of which the Head masters of the numerous Chinese sects (to which reference has been repeatedly made) often found some of their most occult and incommunicable instructions.

A certain sect known as that of the Purifying Pill (煉丹門), claims to have inherited the true Taoist secret of Immortality



a secret which they affirm that the ignorant Taoist priests, who can not even read their own Taoist classic (the *Tao Tê Ching*) have altogether lost.

Without entering into the profound and almost incomprehensible mysteries in which this business of Purifying the Pill of Immortality is shrouded, a few words of explanation will suffice to render intelligible the kind of exposition to which reference is now made. Upon this system man's nature may be compendiously described as composed of three parts, Body, Soul, and Spirit. The Essence of life (精) which for simplicity we loosely render Body, is concentrated in the pubic region (丹田). The Soul (氣) resides in the thoracic cavity, but it is by no means identical with the breath, albeit the same character is employed to denote it to the great mystification of the inquirer. The spirit (神) is supposed to have its headquarters *in the head*.

The process of purification consists in changing or Purifying Body into Soul (精化氣), and then changing or purifying Soul into Spirit (氣化神). Those who practice this art are able to cause the Spirit to leave the Body by the use of certain means, when the Spirit ascends to heaven (or elsewhere) seeing things unutterable. The aperture through which the soul makes its exit, is by some considered to be near the bridge of the nose, by others it is placed at the back of the head, while still a third school affirms that the opening is at the junction of the bones, at the summit of the skull. Such in the baldest outline is one phase of the theory of the Pill of Immortality, a theory, the details of which, however skillfully presented, would probably suffice to exhaust the patience of the most forbearing Reader.

An insurance agent was surprised on looking over the answers to the questions propounded to a person who wished to take out a policy, to find opposite the inquiry: 'Age of parents if living?' The figures, 131 and 123. On investigation he ascertained that this apparently long-lived couple had been dead between thirty and forty years. The applicant, however, explained that his parents '*if living*' would have been of the ages given.

Such instances of mistaken exegesis, may serve as dim and very inadequate analogies to the Chinese method of reasoning from characters. Thus the character for Heaven is explained by the Sects, in two quite different ways: It may be considered as a union



of one *I* (一) one, and *Ta* (大) great, as in the saying: Heaven is one great heaven, and man is a small heaven (天是一大天, 人是一小天), according to others, however, it is composed of *Erh* (二) two, and *Jen* (人) man, and indicates that Man unites in himself the Dual Powers.

The character *Tao* (道) Road, Doctrine, or Reason, is a mine of wisdom for the sect just described. It is composed of *Shou* (首) a head, and *Che* (辵) to go, signifying (according to the sect) not that he who leads makes a road (*tao*), but that the purified Spirit after pursuing a certain course through various parts of the body, and thence up the spinal column as above explained, finally 'goes' out at the 'head!'

The purificationists are firm believers in the proposition that the Three Doctrines are one in essence (三教歸一), and they quote the ancient Sages in a manner which would make those worthies stare with astonishment. The philosopher Mencius had a long conversation with *Kung Sun Ch'ou* (公孫丑) on the moral, intellectual, and 'active-power' (氣) of man. 'I am skillful,' he said (Bk. II. Pt. I. Ch. I. 11), 'in nourishing my vast flowing passion-nature' (我善養吾浩然之氣). No wonder that *Ch'ou* pursued, "I venture to ask what you mean by your 'vast flowing passion-nature?'" (敢問何謂浩然之氣). No wonder, too, that Mencius replied: 'It is difficult to describe it' (難言也). But what would Mencius have said if he could have foreseen that according to the Purificationists there is no difficulty whatever about it. Mencius meant by *Ch'i* (氣) the same that they mean by *Ch'i*, and what he designed to intimate was that he had carried the purification of the pill to a great length, and had become very expert at it.

In like manner, when Confucius tells *Yen Yüan* (Analects XII. 1.) how to 'practice perfect virtue,' his words are held to convey much more than appears upon the surface, or in any known commentary. The passage was thus, "*Yen Yüan* said: 'I beg to ask the steps of that process.' The Master replied, 'Look not at what is contrary to propriety, listen not to what is contrary to propriety, speak not what is contrary to propriety, make no movement which is contrary to propriety'" (非禮勿視, 非禮勿聽, 非禮勿言, 非禮勿動). In the phraseology of the Purificationists, this is called the closing of the four gates, i.e., of the senses, which is to be

followed by the opening of the 'gate to heaven,' that viz., through the top of the skull!

The opening sentence of the Confucian Analects already quoted (according to the orthodox interpretation) is as follows: The Master said, 'Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application?' (學而時習之, 不亦說乎). When we have been informed that the last character but one is to be read *Yüeh* (悅), meaning *to be pleased with*, the sentence is perhaps as perspicuous as any other in the books of which it is the introduction.

Witness now the manner in which the Purificationists deal with these simple words. In order to make their exposition intelligible, however, it must be premised that the Purified Spirit, after having left the Body (*via* the Heavenly Gate), returns through the same opening, but instead of descending the Spinal column, it passes through the front part of the skull, to the roof of the mouth, and thence along the tip of the tongue which must be pressed against the roof of the mouth to meet it. If the tongue is held away from this roof, the Spirit cannot cross. Now when the tongue is held in the position named and vocalized breath is allowed to escape from the throat, there is naturally formed the sound *Erh* (而). For this reason the syllable '*Erh*' has become a symbol and exponent of the theory and practice of the Purificationists. When '*Erh*' is formed, to use a figure from electricity, the circuit is closed and the purification business goes on. When '*Erh*' cannot be formed the circuit is broken, and business is suspended. This recondite theory of the '*Erh*' is a profound secret (a secret which is now intrusted to the honorable confidence of the Reader) and must never be mentioned.

With these explanations we are now prepared for the new (and purified) explanation of this passage, which is this: The Master said, 'To learn *Erh* and to practice it constantly is a thing never to be spoken of' (學而時習之, 不亦說乎).

There are some in Christian lands who think it strange that the Bible should be capable of being made to mean anything, everything or nothing, as when the modern Spiritualist finds the prototype of their Cabinets in the Ark of the covenant, etc., etc. These and other examples show that this use of the Christian Bible is not unparalleled.



Mencius observed (Bk. III. Pt. I.-IV. 15), that he had heard of birds leaving dark valleys to remove to lofty trees (吾聞出於幽谷, 遷于喬木者), an expression which has become a proverbial figure for the change from a worse to a better position. Among the Purificationists and others, this passage is cited as confirmatory of the theory of the flight of the Spirit already described. The Body is the Dark Valley (幽谷), and the heavenly regions are the Lofty Tree (喬木). It would seem strange indeed that such a text should have been thus cited, for according to the Purificationists the Spirit does constantly return from its Lofty Tree to its Dark Valley, yet in the very same sentence, Mencius goes on to say: 'But I have not heard of their descending from lofty trees to enter Dark Valleys' (未聞下喬木而入於幽谷者).

A band of individuals and members of one of the Eight Diagram Sects (八卦門) and firm believers in the Purification doctrines, embraced Christianity, and soon made it evident that with Chinese characters to draw upon, 'reasons' may readily be found 'as plenty as black berries.' In their view removal from the Dark Valley (幽谷) denoted departure from the Eight Diagram Sect. The Valley (谷) character is composed (said they) of Eight Men and Mouth (八人口), meaning eight men with mouths, eight teachers, to wit the leaders of the Eight Diagram Sects. The 'Lofty Tree' to which they had now removed, was the Cross!

Similar to this exposition was that of a Chinese Christian schoolmaster, who informed his pupils that the *Ya* (亞) found in the *O* (惡) character (wicked) refers to Adam (亞當) in commemoration of his having brought sin into the world.

Another teacher explained *I* (義) Righteousness, which is formed of *Wo* (我) and *Yang* (羊) a sheep, by saying that it was an unconscious prophecy of Christ, who alone is able to say, 'I am righteous' (我羊=義)!

Aside from fortune-tellers, and the Sects, the analysis of characters furnishes endless amusement for those who have sufficient education and skill to practice it.

Five friends at a wine-shop entertained themselves by a game of character dissecting. Each one in turn was to produce his character and show that the analysis was correct. Whoever failed was to be fined by being obliged to drink an extra cup of wine.

The first promptly gave his character, in the following verse:—



田字不透風。十字在當中。  
十字推上去。古字贏了酒一盞。

'The character *T'ien* [田] excludes the air,  
The character *Shih* [十] lies in the square;  
When pushed up high that all may see [古]  
It wins my cup of wine for me.'

The second then struck in as follows:—

回字不透風。口字在當中。  
口字推上去。呂字贏一盞。

'The character *Hui* [回] excludes the air,  
The character *K'ou* [口] lies ambushed there;  
When pushed up high as high can be  
The *Lü Tzu* [呂] wins my wine for me.'

Number three proceeded thus:—

囙字不透風。令字在當中。  
令字推上去。含字贏一盞。

'The character *Ling* [囙] excludes the air,  
A smaller *Ling* [令] it has to spare;  
But when to the roof I push it on  
I win my wine by the character *Han*' [含].

The next was ready with this:—

困字不透風。木字在當中。  
木字推上去。杏字贏一盞。

'The character *K'un* [困] excludes the air,  
Yet a Tree is peacefully growing there;  
The inner Wood [木] to the top I bring,  
And win my wine by the character *Hsing*.' [杏].

Despite his advantage as the last speaker, number five found it impossible to think of any suitable character, and while he hesitated, the others gleefully cried: 'The fine, the fine, come drink the wine.' 'Not so fast, quoth he, 'I have a character now,' and thus he chanted.

日字不透風。一字在當中。  
一字推上去。—————

'The character *Yueh* [日] excludes the wind,  
The character *I* [一] is in there pinned;  
The character *I* when once pushed up.'

‘Stop, stop,’ exclaimed the others, ‘there is no such character as that would make.’ ‘Yes, there is,’ he cried, and finished the verse thus:--

一口一大盅。

‘Leaves One big mouth and One big cup!’

His companions burst into a hearty laugh, and remitted his fine. The Chinese language abounds in Children’s Sayings (孩兒語), a few of which have been collected and published. They are more difficult to gather than Proverbs, and far less useful. Some of them are of the nature of “tongue-traps,” like our ‘Peter Piper pepper picker,’ etc. The line between such diversions of educated leisure and some which have been already quoted is as invisible as a parallel of Latitude. Three specimens are appended, the rapid enunciation of which is to most Chinese nearly impossible without making slips, although more foreigners find little difficulty, unless it be with the last. In the translation of the second, the difficulty (for a Chinese) is represented by substituting *th* for the letters.

### 劉老六

有個六十六歲劉老六。  
家有六十六座高大樓。  
樓裏放着六十六簍桂花油。  
六十六疋大紅紬。  
樓下也有六十六盤大轆軸。  
拴着六十六隻大犏牛。  
驚了牛。  
拉倒樓。  
撒了油。  
染了紬。  
氣殺六十六歲劉老六。

#### LIU LAO LIU.

Old Liu the sixth, whose age was sixty-six,  
Owned six and sixty mansions built of bricks;  
Stored in the lofts, for fear the goods would spoil,  
Were six and sixty crates of cassia oil;  
And red silk stuff most pleasing to the eye,  
Just six and sixty bales spread out to dry;  
While underneath were kept for use unknown  
Some six and sixty rollers made of stone.

Hitched to the post on which the beams recline,  
 Were six and sixty head of brindled kine.  
 Some vicious person with a base design,  
 So terrified those six and sixty kine,  
 They wrenched the posts—those mighty cattle brown—  
 And pulled the six and sixty mansions down!  
 The silks and oil were mingled then by Fate,  
 Each bale absorbed the contents of a crate.  
 Old Liu the sixth deprived of all he'd got,  
 Of grief and rage expired upon the spot!

### 吃葡萄

誰吃葡萄不吐葡萄皮。  
 吃葡萄纔吐葡萄皮。  
 不吃葡萄難吐葡萄皮。  
 是吃葡萄正吐葡萄皮。

#### GRAPETH THKINTH.

Who eateth grapeth, yet thpiteth not out the thkinth of grapeth?  
 Tith he that eateth grapeth that thpiteth out the thkinth of grapeth.  
 For he that eateth not of grapeth can not thpit out the thkinth of  
 grapeth;  
 But, as was said, who eateth grapeth can then thpit out the thkinth  
 of grapeth.

### 崔粗腿

山前有個崔粗腿。  
 山後有個粗腿崔。  
 倆人山前來比腿。  
 也不知崔粗腿的腿粗。  
 也不知粗腿崔的腿粗。

#### TS'UI THICK-LEGS AND THICK-LEGS TS'UI.

In front of a hill there dwelt a man whose name was Ts'ai Thick-Legs,  
 While back of the hill another man lived whose name was Thick-Legs Ts'ui.  
 Both came to the front of the hill one day on purpose to measure  
 their Legs;  
 So close the shave between the two no mortal could venture to say,  
 Whether 'twas Ts'ui Thick-Legs that won, or whether 'twas Thick-Legs  
 Ts'ui.



## PUNS.—TWO SENSES OF THE SAME CHARACTER.

The extent to which the Chinese employ puns which depend upon 'borrowing' one meaning of one character for another may perhaps justify a somewhat copious illustration of their characteristics. Almost every Chinese character combines within itself many meanings totally distinct from each other, a circumstance which gives occasion for a multitude of puns in which a word is used in one sense to suggest another sense of the same word.

The character *Shen* (神) for example, signifies divinities, and also animal spirits, etc.

'The old priest sold his temple, but kept his gods.' (老和尚賣廟, 留神), *i.e.*, Take care (留神).

'The local god catching grasshoppers, an agitated divinity' (土地爺捕螞蚱, 荒了神), *i.e.*, *disturbed in spirits* (荒了神). 'A beggar letting off fireworks, the poor man's *Ch'i* goes up to heaven' (花子放氣花, 窮氣昇了天), *i.e.*, He who is in distress complains to every one he meets. His breath is like the exploding gases in his rocket.

'Locust's heads in dumplings,—all mouth' (螞蚱頭包扁食, 竟嘴), of one all of whose capacity is lodged in his mouth,—good for nothing but talk.

'A crow stumbling,—propped up by his mouth' (bill), (老鴿打前失, 嘴支着), similar to the last, "all talk and no cider."

'An old pig raising a bamboo door-screen,—lifted by means of his mouth' (老豬掀竹簾, 仗着嘴挑着), same as the last.

'On the old lady's birthday they buy her meat' (老太太的生日要打肉). On ordinary occasions she cannot afford meat. To buy meat is called *ta jou* (打肉). To say to a child: 'An old lady's birthday,' would imply, 'You will get a whipping' (要打肉).

'The meat seller carrying an ornamental portal upon his shoulder,—what an imposing frame-work!' (扛着牌坊賣肉, 好大架子). Of one who affects a grand style (好大架子).

'A clay doll carrying on its shoulder an ornamental portal,—the person is small, but what a fine frame' (泥娃娃扛牌坊, 人兒雖小, 他的架子好大), same as the last.

'To knock on the city gate at midnight,—striking against a nail' (半夜叩城門, 碰釘子). The iron bound gate of the city

will not be opened until daylight; why beat on it? Metaphorically to run against obstructions (碰釘子)

'Turning a somersault on a cloudy day—there's no shadow.' (陰天打跟頭, 沒影子), *i.e.*, not a trace (沒影子), to be found, of anything lost, etc.

'The story-teller looks at his fan, but has no book' (說平書的看扇子, 沒有本), *i.e.*, Of one who has no capital (沒有本).

'Wang Lien Feng, the story-teller, went according to his book' (王蓮峯說書, 照本). This individual (a Tientsin man of the time of Tao Kuang), employed in a tea-shop to recite stories, instead of trusting to his memory, as others of the class do, held a volume open before him. Hence, said of one whose operations are limited to his capital (照本).

'A grave-yard plot is not so good as a heart-plot; the house of the dead is not so good as concealed merit' (陰田, 不如心田, 陰宅, 不如陰德). The heart is variously called the 'inch plot' (方寸), and the 'heart plot' (心田). Hence the saying: 'If you desire the most complete happiness, you must depend upon cultivating the heart.' (欲廣福田, 須憑心地). Unostentatious merit (陰德) is the object of much praise on the part of the Chinese, but the statistics of its cultivation, were they attainable, would not perhaps make so good a showing as one would suppose from the frequency with which it is talked about.

'A weighing-pole without stars [dots], weighs nothing with certainty' (沒有星的秤, 定不準了). Of one who has no fixed purpose, who cannot decide, etc. (定不了準).

'The old villager having never seen a watering-pot,—a broken mouth' (莊家老兒未見過噴壺, 碎嘴子). The phrase *sui-tsui* (碎嘴子) is used of those who are fond of picking faults.

'Yen Wang's fan,—a dark face' (閻王的扇子, 陰面), of one whose countenance conceals his true character (陰面).

'Bean-curd tied with a horse-hair,—cannot be lifted' (馬尾拴豆腐提不起來), of anything which must not be mentioned. (提不起來).

'The old villager having never seen a gauze veil,—does not mind about his face' (莊家老兒未見過障紗, 不顧面). Met. of one who has no self-respect (不顧面).

'Trousers worn on the head,—one cannot show his face' (頭上穿套褲, 臉上下不來). Similar to the last.



'The shoes of *Yao Ssu*,—no face' (姚四的鞋, 沒有臉). A Tientsin man who always wore round tipped shoes; hence said of one with no 'face,' self-respect.

'*Ho Erh Pa* selling sheeps' lungs,—he has no heart' (賀二爺賣肺, 沒心了), a Tientsin Mohammedan who sold meat, one of whose customers wished to buy a sheep's heart. 'Take the lungs,' said the meatman, 'for *I have no heart*.' Used metaphorically.

'A guitar which gives no sound when played, no rest for the strings' (彈不響的琵琶, 沒有品了). The *p'in* (品) 'rest' of a guitar causes the resonance of the strings. Met. of one whose behavior is improper (沒有品了.)

'An old lady's toes,—bent and hard to straighten out' (老太太的腳指頭曲而難伸). Used of any one whose wrongs are great, and hard to be redressed (曲而難伸).

'The old villager having never seen rice porridge,—sticky paste' (莊家老兒未見過大米粥, 糊塗椀子). The expression *hu tu* (糊塗) signifies glutinous, and also stupid. Used of block-heads.

'The Territorial Intendant, and the Salt Commissioner each goes his own way' (本道鹽道各行其道). Each *Tao-t'ai* has his own *tao*. Let every one attend to his own affairs.

'A blind man grinding a knife,—sharp' (瞎子磨刀—快了), *i.e.*, quick (快). 'When do you want this?' asks the carpenter who is making you a table. 'A blind man grinding a knife,' is the reply, from which he understands that it is to be quickly (快快).

'Two Mohammedans fighting,—this one is not that one' (兩個回回打架, 這回子不是那回子), *i.e.*, this time (回 turn) is altogether different from the other.

The Mohammedans, although to a casual observer one with the Chinese, form merely a mechanical, in distinction from a chemical, combination. It is notorious that some of the most desperate robbers are of this race, and the Chinese recognize in their physiognomy, especially in the nose, a proof of the violent temper popularly ascribed to them. Jests at their expense are common. Thus a man and wife were awakened at night by a noise. *She* said it was a thief, he declared it was only a dog. This happened twice, but the third time the thief effected his purpose. In the morning the woman said: 'There! I said each time it was a man, and you said each time it was a dog' (我說回回是賊, 你說回回是狗)



*q.d.*, 'I said Mohammedans are thieves, but according to you, they are dogs.'

In the *Chinese Repository* (Vol. XIII., p. 32), is mentioned another instance of the fondness of the Chinese for reviling the bigoted Moslem strangers from the remote west. It is related that over the door of a mosque in *Hang Chou* there was an inscription of four characters, as follows: (西方聖人) 'The Holy Man of the West,' i.e., Mohammed. *Kuan Ti* (關帝) the Chinese Mars, came riding by on his cloud, and perceiving the characters, was very angry, and ordered *Chou Ts'ang* (周倉), his servant, to efface them. Another version claims that it was Confucius who gave *Tzu Lu* (子路), his pupil, the order to obliterate the characters, on the ground that the title 'Holy Man' is the prerogative of Confucius alone. Instead, however, of chiselling out the characters altogether, *Chou Ts'ang* removed only the upper part of each, leaving the characters (四方王八), i.e., 'Four Myriads of Bastards' (万) is the contracted form of *Wan* (萬), ten thousand. As given in the *Chinese Repository* the change was incomplete, *Fang* (方) being allowed to stand intact.

Among other unfavorable peculiarities, the disciples of the Prophet have the reputation for an unlimited capacity in using violent language.

A local saying giving an estimate of the comparative demerits of Peking and Tientsin people has been already cited. The Mohammedans are believed to be even worse. Hence the saying runs: 'Ten Peking sharpers cannot talk down one Tientsin wrangler, and ten Tientsin wranglers cannot talk down one Mohammedan' (十個京油子, 說不過一個衛嘴子, 十個衛嘴子, 說不過一個回子).

Many Chinese puns, or half puns, depend for their spice on the use of a word in a peculiar and unusual sense. Of these expressions great numbers are only intelligible in particular districts, and if

The Chinese place the same confidence in the abstemiousness of Mohammedans as in the Reformed Cat which would no more catch rats. It is well known that despite the prohibition of pork it is readily eaten by many Mohammedans when it can be done without detection. Hence the proverb: *I Ko Hui Hui pu shih Hui Hui—liang Ko Hui Hui ts'ai shih Hui Hui* (一個回回不是回回, 兩個回回纔是回回), i.e., if alone a Mohammedan will disguise himself at an inn and eat pork, while if there are two of them each is a check on the other. Whole villages of Mohammedans have been known to recant, whereupon they are reviled by their late co-religionists, and have pig-bladders hung over their doors as ridicule.

used elsewhere must be explained as if quoted from a foreign language. The same is true of phrases as of individual characters. Owing to the vast area over which the Mandarin colloquial in some one of its varieties is spoken, and the singular circumstance that colloquial expressions appear to rove about the Empire at will, intelligible here, unintelligible in the next District, or across a river, and again intelligible at points five hundred miles distant, it is generally next to impossible to decide with accuracy what is current Colloquial (官話) and what is mere local patois, or 'ground talk' (土話). So far as our present purpose is concerned, viz., the exhibition of certain qualities of the Chinese language, it is of no consequence whether any particular saying is current everywhere, provided it is current *somewhere*. Many examples of the class of provincialisms in question will be found scattered through the following pages but a few are appended below, in a group.

'A defeated cricket,—he gives up his mouth' (筒子的蝻蝻讓了口了). Crickets are set to fighting in little earthen-ware jars, like cocks in a pit, that spectators may bet on their respective merits. A beaten insect is called *t'ung tze* (筒子). His 'throwing up the sponge' is called *jang-liao-kou-liao* (讓了口了). The same phrase means, in general, defeat, or failure, in which sense the saying is employed.

'A donkey in a mill,—his mouth muzzled' (磨房的驢子, 攏住口了). The muzzle is to prevent him from turning his head and eating the grain from the lower mill-stone. The phrase is used when a noisy brawling fellow is suddenly hushed up.

'The flesh of a little pig,—half fat' (小豬子肉, 半膘子). The phrase *pan-piao-tzu* (半膘子) is used of a person who is half crazy, or lacking in good sense.

'A dead crab,—no froth on his mouth' (死螃蟹無沫了). The phrase *wu-mo-liao* (無沫了) is employed to denote one who has no resources, no plan, or no decision.

The cannon of *Tu Chih Heng*,—empty tubes' (杜智恒的砲空筒子). This was the traitor who opened the *P'ing-tzu* Gate (平子門) of Peking to *Li Tzu Ch'eng* (李自成). The cannon which *Tu* mounted were empty. The phrase *k'ung-t'ung-tzu* (空筒子) denotes emptiness and false pretensions.

'A small knife falling into a well,—it cuts deep' (小刀子掉在井裏, 刺的不淺). The phrase *lu jen* (刺人) signifies to take



them in, to 'do' them, 'Doing them deep' (不淺) means that they have been badly bitten.

'Blowing through a hollow dough-nut,—a twisted fiber' (吹筒麻花, 擰着個筋), Chinese *ma hua* (麻花) are generally twisted over and over, and are sometimes made with a cavity in the middle. The expression 'twist the muscle' (擰筋) is used of one who disagrees with others, or is in any way impracticable.

'A stone roller falling into a well,—the hole in the middle (eye) goes to the bottom' (墩穀輓掉在井裏, 眼子到底了). The phrase *Yen tzu* (眼子) is used of one who is always getting imposed upon. The saying implies that he carries the art of being cheated to a high degree of perfection, or that he will always continue to be expert at it (眼子到底了).

'Theatricals with shadow figures,—enough to let the light through' (屬影子戲人的, 足了個透). These figures are made of paper, cut in such a manner as to let the light shine through in certain places, as the eyes, etc.; the figures are cut with a knife, and the operation is called *tsu*. The saying is used, like the reduplicated phrase *tsu-kou* (足穀), to indicate 'ample abundance' of any kind.

'A can't-upset image sitting in a chicken cage,—the whole body debts, and holes besides' (搬不倒坐鷄籠, 一身賬, 又是窟窿). The body of the image is made of paper pasted on a light frame. Old account books are employed to save expense. Hence the phrase 'the whole body all debts' (一身賬). A debt is colloquially termed a hole (窟窿) and to contract debt is often called 'drawing holes' (拉窟窿). The interstices of a chicken coop suggest these 'holes.' The saying is used of one who is over ears in debt (一身賬又是窟窿).

According to popular belief there are three powers which control Happiness, Official Emoluments, and Old Age, and these powers are called 'Stars.' Hence the felicitous phrase over doorways: 'May the three Stars illuminate here' (三星高照). The Old Age Star (壽星老) is generally represented as a person of great size, and with a head of immense proportions. Now according to Chinese ideas any one who has attained to such dimensions as the *Shou Hsing Lao* is sure to be extremely stupid, unable in fact to hold his own as against others. A man who spends money unnecessarily, or merely to gratify himself, is said to 'spend griev-



ance money' (花冤錢) paying, for example, for a curio three times its value merely because he was resolved to have it. Such persons are called 'Big-heads' (大頭) in allusion to the notion about large people just mentioned, and also 'Great meat-heads' (大肉頭) or 'Big-heads that do as they like' (如意大頭). As the Old Age Star answers these conditions, he is taken as the ideal 'Big-head,' and many jokes are made at his expense as in the following sayings.

The expression *t'ou-ling-pei* (透玲碑), it must be premised, is in colloquial use to denote clear intelligence. 'The *Shou Hsing Lao* wearing on his head a glass aquarium,—a transparent Big-head!' (壽星老兒帶魚缸, 透玲碑兒的大頭), said in derision of one who wastes his money, but is still pleased with his own shrewdness. The size of his head, and the nature of its clearness, are apparent to every one but himself.

The word *Yüan* (for which there is no character) is colloquially employed in the sense of 'tuck under,' as bed clothes. This fact will suffice to explain another jest at the expense of the venerable *Shou Hsing*. 'The Old Age Star covering himself with a saddle cloth, his head is too big to be tucked in' (壽星老兒蓋馬褥子, 冤不過來的大腦代). The saddle-cloth is too short for a bed-quilt. The words *Yüan-pu-kuo-lai* (冤不過來) here used in the sense just given, are intended to suggest their original meaning: 'No one could possibly be more imposed upon than he!'

The words *Tao-chia* (到家) are colloquially used to mean exhaustively, as, *Shuo-pu-tao-chia* (說不到家) 'impossible to exhaust the meaning;' or extreme, excessive, as *Chiung-tao-chia* (窮到家) 'poor to the last extent.' The Old Age Star is often represented in pictures as knocking at the door of his own dwelling, while beneath is the following legend: 'The *Shou Hsing Lao* knocking at his door,—the old Meat-head has reached home' (壽星老兒叩門肉頭到家). This is used to imply that some one who is fond of expending 'grievance money,' or *yüan-ch'ien*, has carried the business to an extreme point—is, in fact, a 'perfect meat-head' (肉頭到家).

'We are like the sign of a paint shop,—one stick is close to another' (咱們是顏料舖的幌子, 棍靠棍). The sign (幌子) which indicates the shops where oils and lacker are sold, is composed of several sticks (棍) of various colors, arranged close to one another. A man who is quite destitute of everything, is called

a 'Bare stick' (光棍), and as these are the individuals who are the enemies of society, the words signify a bully, black-leg, etc. The saying denotes that as you have nothing and I am in the same case, therefore like the sticks in a shop sign we must stand by each other (棍靠棍).

'The little bald boy taking off his cap,—perfectly bare' (小秃子摘帽子, 精光). Similar to the last, nothing in hand, bare (精光).

'Sitting in a sedan-chair and wailing,—he does not know when he is lifted up' (坐轎嚎噪, 不識抬舉). Of one who fails to recognize the fact, when he is recommended and praised (不識抬舉).

'The steelyard ball weighing down the balances,—no weight' (秤鉈押天平, 沒法子). The weight of the weighing pole called a *t'o* (鉈) is supposed to be placed upon the pan of a pair of balances, the proper weights of which, called *fa-ma* (法碼) or simply *fa-tzu* (法子), are missing. Used of anything to accomplish which there is no way (沒有法子).

The customs observed in the worship of the Chinese kitchen-god (灶王爺) give rise to a great variety of sayings. Immediately over the cooking boiler (鍋) is a little board forming a shelf, on which are placed the offerings to the kitchen-god and his wife, a paper image of whom is fastened just above, with or without a cheap frame made of stalks, for a shrine (龕). On the twenty-third of the twelve month, this divinity is popularly supposed to ascend to heaven, and report to *Shang Ti* everything that he has seen during the year, though the Taoist 'Book of Rewards and Punishments' (感應篇) distinctly affirms that these reports are rendered *monthly*: 'On the last day of the moon the kitchen-god does the same' (月晦之日, 灶神亦然), the same, that is, as the other gods already mentioned. The discrepancy would be of less consequence were it not for the fact that the Chinese—for sufficient reasons—are very anxious to have these reports couched in the most favorable terms. With this view the offerings on the departure of the god are made.\* The image of the god, and the shrine,

\* Those who are interested in the detail of such ceremonies, will find them circumstantially described in Mr. Doolittle's *Social Life of the Chinese*, Vol. II, pp. 81-85. In this, however, as in almost everything else, 'Customs are not uniform for ten *li* together, usages differ every hundred *li*' (十里不同風, 百里不同俗).



if there be one, are burned in the cooking furnace, and are supposed to constitute the 'horse' on which he ascends.

Hence the saying: 'The kitchen-god coming down from his shelf—he leaves the board' (灶王爺下鍋台, 離了板了). This is a pun on the word meaning castanets (板) which are expected to harmonize with the other music. If played wrong the performer is said to have 'left the board' (離了板了), *i.e.*, gone astray. The proverb is used of any violation of propriety, when the offender is described as 'The kitchen-god leaving his board.'

Another similar saying runs: 'Beating on a drum while playing the lily-flowers,—he has no boards' (打蓮花落的敲鼓, 沒有板了). The *Lien-hua-lao* (蓮花落) is a substitute for the castanet. Two large pieces of bamboo are held in one hand and struck together, while in the other several smaller pieces are also violently shaken. This is the prelude to a theatrical performance, like the preliminary flourishes of an orchestra. The supposition is, that, instead of beating the lily-flowers, a drum is struck, the explanation of which is that the pieces of bamboo (板) are lacking. Used of anything in which usage is violated (沒有板了).

When the kitchen-god is burned and started heavenward, the master of ceremonies is a man, as on the fifteenth of the eighth month a woman is supposed to officiate (男不圓月, 女不祭灶), and he makes some observations like the following: (灶王爺本姓張, 有年糕有瓜糖, 上天言好事, 少說是非).

Come god-of-the-kitchen, whose surname is Chang,  
Now here is your pudding, and here is your *t'ang*;  
When you get up to Heaven it will make us all glad,  
If you tell what is good, and omit what is bad.

This is the 'farewell address' to the divinity, but the shrewd Celestial who makes it, has very likely resolved to circumvent the *Tsao-wang-yeh*, and render it impossible for him to give any report at all. This is the 'true inwardness' of the *t'ang*, or sugar just mentioned. It is a candy of a particularly glutinous nature, called *kua-t'ang* (瓜糖), and is sometimes not only offered, but even rubbed on the cooking-range, the orifice of which is regarded as the kitchen-god's mouth, in order to stick his lips tightly together, so that when he reaches *Shang Ti* he shall be unable to utter a word! Hence the saying: 'The kitchen-god going to heaven,—his mouth pasted up' (灶王昇天, 粘着嘴咧).



Notwithstanding this artifice,—which the god was perhaps driven to circumvent by monthly returns,—the following couplet is often put up over his image: ‘Go to heaven and make a good report. Return to your mansion and obtain felicity’ (上天言好事, 回宮降吉祥). In consequence of the constant use of the words in this connection, the expression ‘Returned to his mansion’ (回了宮了), has come to be a euphemism for the death of any one.

A person who is in vain pursuit of a house to rent, or who has just sold his dwelling, is compared to the kitchen-god, after his image and shrine have been burned, and before the new ones have been set up. ‘The kitchen-god gone to heaven,—no place to live’ (灶王爺上天沒了住處).

When he returns at the beginning of the New Year, he finds a new shrine, a new image, etc. Hence the saying: ‘The kitchen-god coming home,—everything new’ (灶王爺回家, 一搭兒新), is used of one who has a complete new outfit of clothing, a new dwelling, etc.

The partner of the kitchen-god is represented with him in the common images, but in case of a ‘Bachelor’s hall,’ it would be obviously improper to introduce a *Tsao-wang-nai-nai* (灶王奶奶), accordingly in this case the god has no mate. Hence of any one who is quite solitary, it is said that he is ‘A kitchen-god in a Bachelor’s hall,—sitting alone’ (光棍堂的灶王爺, 獨坐兒).

A person of violent temper, who is always seeking occasions for quarrels is said to revenge himself, in case he finds no one to fight with, by reviling the kitchen-god, the most convenient individual sure to be available. ‘Three days without a fight,—pointing to the cooking-boiler and abusing the *Tsao Wang*’ (三天不打架, 指着鍋台罵竈王).

The Chinese make great use of a peculiar kind of earthenware, which is extremely fragile, but which, on account of its thinness, is heated with a very small quantity of fuel. It has a lustre like that of stove polish, and often seems little thicker than egg shells. With careful usage they are made to last a long time. The adage runs, ‘The earthenware sauce pan will last a life-time if you do not hit it’ (砂鍋不打, 一輩子不漏). Rough usage, however, soon puts an end to its career. ‘Garlic may be pounded in an earthenware saucepan, but it can be done only once’ (砂鍋擣蒜, 一椎子的買賣).

One vessel made of this ware is used exclusively for heating water, and is fitted with a cover which cannot be lifted, so that everything must be poured in through the wide spout. These utensils are called *Sha-tiao-tzu* (砂銚子 there is no authorised character), and it is to them that the following proverb refers: 'Dumplings are boiled in a *Sha-tiao-tzu*,—they are in it, but they cannot be poured out through the mouth' (沙銚子煮扁食, 肚裡有, 嘴裏倒不出來). This saying is used like the adage, 'A dumb man seeing his mother in a dream,—something to say, but no way of saying it' (啞叭夢見娘, 有話, 無處說). 'Floating clouds in mid-air,—no substance' (半懸空的浮雲, 沒有根了).

'A blind man carrying a lantern,—empty pretence of seeing clearly' (瞎子打燈籠, 混充明眼). The expression *ming-yen* (明眼) is used in general of a person of intelligence, and among the Secret Sects (教門) it is applied to those who review the performances (看功夫) of the members, with a view to deciding on their respective merits.

'A rat entering a library,—gnawing characters' (耗子進書房咬字). The phrase (咬文嚼字) 'gnawing sentences and chewing characters,' is applied to one who lays great stress on externals in study, a pedant. The mention of 'a Rat in a study,' is intended to suggest this meaning.

'Eating lily root with only one chop-stick,—picking it up by the holes' (一根快子喫藕, 挑眼). This root has many apertures, called 'eyes.' The expression *t'iao-yen* (挑眼) means to 'pick flaws,' in which sense the proverb is employed.

'A little girl mourning for her brother-in-law,—useless howling' (小姨子哭姐夫, 白嚎); a younger sister is supposed to have no relations whatever with the husband of her elder sister, not even to speak with him, although *this* rule is at times violated! When he dies it is not her business to mourn, as it is 'none of her funeral.' The expression is applied to useless begging, especially of the clamorous kind (白嚎).

'Like a foreign cup,—the bottom is coarse' (屬洋碗的, 是个粗底). The phrase 'coarse at bottom' (粗底) is applied to those whose origin can be traced back to wood-cutters, water-carriers, etc., in which sense the saying is used.

'Like old millet boiled,—grain by grain' (老小米子的飯, 粒粒羅羅的). Millet which has been kept for several years can-



not be boiled soft. The expression *li-lo* (粒羅), characters doubtful, is used of anything which is done orderly and well.

'There are smoked chickens and smoked ducks, but no smoked men' (只有熏雞熏鴨的, 沒有熏人的). The expression 'smoking a man' (熏人) is employed of abusive, depreciatory or threatening language. The saying means that while fowls are to be cured by a smoking process, this treatment should not be extended to human beings.

'The girdle of Wang the Fat Man,—loose and long' (王胖子的褲腰帶, 希鬆平常). The phrase *hsi-sung-p'ing-ch'ang* (希鬆平常) is used of anything which is common-place, nothing out of the ordinary line, to convey which idea is the purpose of the saying.

The word *bitter*, *k'u* (苦) is used in the secondary sense of poverty, pain and trouble of any kind even more frequently than in its literal signification. Hence the saying of one who is very poor, or in deep distress: 'Three-tenths more bitter than yellow gentian' (比黃蓮苦三分). Of the same sort is the following: 'If you are bitter, just murmur at fate' (苦了只怨命). The expression is used in banter, for example of cucumbers or melons which turn out to be bitter: 'If they are bitter lay it to fate' (苦了只怨命).

'White rice dropped into clear water,—one can see to the bottom at a glance' (清水下白米, 一眼看到底). This saying is employed of anything easily understood,—clear and plain (清白) and which is intelligible at first sight (一眼看到底).

'Your chopping-knife and my whetstone—each recognizes his own whetstone' (你的壓刀子我的銼, 自認己銼), *i.e.*, every one knows his own faults (自認己錯).

'An old villager who has never seen a figured mattress,—spotted bedding' (莊家老, 未見過花褥子, 點兒被). Luck is called *yün-ch'i* (運氣). When one's luck turns, as in gambling, it is said to 'go back on him' (點兒背), to signify which the saying is used.

'When the water is hot, it is no go' (水熱下不去), *i.e.*, of a bath too hot to be entered. Met., of borrowing, etc., which 'won't go down' (下不去).

'One who has entertained guests for many years,—an old host' (多年的賓主, 老東西). Literally *east-west*, from the position of guest and host, *i.e.*, an old article (老東西), a curio (古董).



'Daylight and snowing,—clear and white' (天亮下雪, 明白了), *i.e.*, I understand (明白了).

'Old,—no further addition' (老了, 不添了). In China whatever a customer can be induced to pay is the market price. The purchaser makes his offer, and the dealer urges him to 'add' a little to it. 'No,' replies the other, 'I am old and shall add no more,' referring to parents too old to 'add' to their families (不添了).

'A candy pull in third-nine [after the winter solstice],—no go' (三九裏的拔糖, 不行). When the weather is cold the candy is too hard to pull. Metaphorically of anything which is 'no go' (不行).

'Wu Ta Lang's bag,—hanging down' (武大郎的口袋, 累贅). His stature was so short that the bag depended so as to be always in the way. Of anything troublesome (累贅).

'A bride mourning for her husband,—good heaven!' (新媳婦哭男人, 好天). Husband and wife are supposed to stand to each other in the relation of Heaven and Earth. When the husband dies the wife is said to be left, like the earth without the sun. In her grief, she calls on the dead as her 'good heaven.' Used of a clear day (好天).

'A sparrow crossing the sea,—no place to light' (家雀兒過海, 沒有落兒). Of one who has no resources (沒有落兒).

'The Judge in Hades summoning a doctor,—a sick devil' (判官請大夫是鬼病). In the temples of the City god, *P'an kuan* is the dispenser of the awards and punishment. When the City god (城隍) holds his court, *P'an kuan* is in attendance with functions analogous to those of the clerks known as *tien-shih* (典史) in the Yamèn of a *Chih-hsien* (知縣) or District Magistrate. Met. used of concealed misdemeanors, squeezes, etc., (私弊) which are called *kuei-ping* (鬼病), to commit which is known as to 'Act the devil' (作鬼).

'When the new-born infant slips into a flour jar,—he comes white all his life' (落草兒掉在麵缸裏, 白來一世). Met., of one with whom nothing ever prospers, and who appears to have come into the world in vain (白來一世).

'A Tiger drawing a stone roller,—do not hear about such a harness as that!' (老虎拉轆子, 不聽那一套). There is no harness (套) that would be strong enough to keep a Tiger dragging

a stone roller. The expression means, 'Do not listen to such idle talk' (不聽那一套).

'White earthenware dishes,—what a set you have!' (白磁盆子, 看你這一套). Of one whose language is false or preposterous (假話一套).

'Sedan-chair-coolies coming upon a dog,—alive!' (抬轎的見狗, 活的). Every one who has travelled in a Chinese chair must have noticed the responsive grunts of the bearers, much resembling the social croak of a number of frogs. Chair-bearers have in fact, a little brogue of their own. Thus, when the front bearers spy a dog in the path of the presence of which they wish to warn the hind bearers that they may not stumble, instead of crying '*kou*,' 'Dog,' they shout '*huo-ti*' (活的) 'Alive!' Hence the expression quoted, used in reference to fish, for example, which is demonstrably fresh, for it is 'Sedan-chair-coolies coming upon a dog,' by which the bearer understands '*huo-ti*'—*alive*. In like manner, wherever water is to be avoided, the shout is 'slippery,' (滑), and if a roof or other obstruction threatens a collision the cry as '*k'ao*' (靠), as *shang-k'ao*, *hsia-k'ao*, *tso-k'ao*, *yu-k'ao* etc., to indicate the situation as above, below, to the left or to the right.

'Prancing in front and jumping behind,—extremely unsteady' (前躡後跳的, 狠不老實). Of one who is restless or untrustworthy (不老實).

'Cleaning out chimneys with a hemp stalk,—black when the work is done' (蔴杆子打烟筒, 黑了爲止). Used of anything which continues only until dark (黑了爲止).

'The story-teller without his musical instrument,—talking without any accompaniment' (說書的不帶弦子, 白講). Used of useless discussion (白講).

'A feast spread at the top of a mast,—lofty display' (桅杆頂上設筵, 高擺). Said of one who affects a grand style to which he has no claim (高擺).

'The barber clapping his hands,—he does not take hold of the head' (剃頭的拍把掌, 沒有挈首). Of one not equal to the situation (沒有挈手).

'A Shansi man eating sea crabs,—he takes them by the legs' (老西吃螃蟹, 拿腿). Of one who runs as fast as his legs will carry him (拿腿).



'The fish dealer who has not brought his basket,—he hooks the mouths' (賣魚的不帶籃子, 鈎嘴兒). Of one who attacks another with bantering or abusive language (鈎嘴兒).

'A doll made of yellow gentian,—a bitter child' (黃蓮堆娃娃, 苦小子). Used of a lad who has a hard lot (苦小子).

'A mirror hung with the glass to the wall,—no reflection' (反面掛鏡子, 此人有些不照頭). Used of one who gives no promise of anything good (不照頭).

'Twenty-five garlic-bulbs,—a small braid' (二十五頭蒜, 小辮兒). Garlic is braided together by the stems in lots of one hundred. Twenty-five only, are called a 'small braid,' used of a person with small cue (小辮兒).

'Entering a pawn-shop with a child in one's arms,—willing one-self to pawn the child, but the shop-keeper will not take him in pawn' (抱著孩子進當舖, 自己當人, 人家不當人). Used of one who considers himself to be somebody (自己當人) but who is despised by others (人家不當人).

That there are in use in every locality great numbers of words which have no corresponding character, is a circumstance familiar to every student of Chinese. There is, as already remarked a vulgar patois (which springs from the ground like weeds), a current colloquial, and also a literary style. Moreover the frontiers of these territories are as ill defined as the terminus of a rainbow, and as difficult of determination as the boundary between Enough and Too Much. All this is well known. There is another fact even more depressing.

Every one has seen the ivory balls in the production of which the Cantonese are so expert. To external appearance one of them seems to resemble a billiard ball, but upon examination it is found to have a small eye, through which may be seen another distinct and perfect ball within. This in turn, has also an opening through which may be dimly discerned a third ball, also with an aperture of its own, and so on. Each ball, in other words, is a hollow sphere, down to the last, which is solid. No wonder that upon first meeting with these toys, foreigners puzzled themselves, as to how the contents could possibly have been introduced. No wonder, too, that some of an inquisitive turn of mind, boiled the little globes in oil, to open therein the cunningly concealed seams at which they are joined. Such experiments, it is needless to say, proved a failure,



for joint there was none, and all the requisite chiselling had been done through the little opening, with a dexterity which seemed like sleight of hand.

The ivory ball may represent to us the Chinese language as a whole, the inner spheres are its manifold styles and dialects, and in the 'deep interior' are lodged sundry little nodules to which we will, for a moment, direct our attention. In the first place there are provincial periphrases which may be termed *nicknames*. Thus:

A bald man is nicknamed Old Light (老亮);

A one eyed man is called Old Hall (老殿);\*

A pock-marked man is called Old Sea (老海);

A lame man is called Old Abundance (老盛);

A humpback is called Old Harmony (老翁);

A hare-lip is called Old Phoenix (老鳳);

One whose face is badly scarred, is called Old Beauty (老俊).

Appellations of this sort, like everything else Chinese, not improbably vary in different localities. In the next place, there are the trade brogues, called *Shih-yü* (市語), or *Tiao-shih-yü* (調市語), which are exemplifications of Talleyrand's maxim that language is the instrument by which thought is concealed.

Here, for instance, are four sets of numerals, one preëmpted by the Brass and Pewter trade, another the prerogative of Curio dealers, a third the peculiar birthright of small dealers in fresh fruits, fish, etc., and a fourth sacred to Barbers and blind Fortune-tellers (think of a dialect with a notice, None but Barbers admitted)!

1. Brass and Pewter dealer's numerals (由中人共大天地景洋洪).

2. Curios and second hand clothes dealer's numerals (肖到挑羅福尊現世吾哥).

3. Numerals of the dealers in fresh fruits, fresh fish, etc. (搖柳搜哨歪料壳笨攪勾).

4. Barber's and Fortune-teller's numerals (柳月汪在中神仙張太君).

\* This particular nickname (current in Tientsin) is said to have originated from a well known desperado (混星子) who lived many generations ago. He was one-eyed, and was known as Old Hall (老殿). His notoriety brought his name into use as a synonym for one-eyed persons. The same explanation might perhaps be given of several other expressions of the same class. The phenomenon is a curious one.

Only one or two characters seem to be common to any two of the lists. One of them confounds confusion by introducing the sound of the character five in the place of nine. In one of these trade dialects the character for *beans*, *Tou* (豆) means great, for *Tu* (大) the character meaning to *wash* *Hsi* (洗) signifies small, for *Hsiao* (小), thus by a comparatively slight change in the sound, we have for 'great' *Tou-ko-ti* (豆個的), for 'small' *Hsi-ko-ti* (洗個的), etc.

Whoever has curiosity enough to investigate these secret dialects will find in them, as in other forms of Chinese speech, unity in variety and variety in unity. There is no certainty that the brogue of a particular trade, which is current in Peking will be equally current in Si-ngan-fu, yet it may be so. The, Fortune-teller, for example, who instructs his pupil in the mysteries of the craft, and introduces him to the circle of his own acquaintance, must also teach him the secret dialect of the guild. This becomes his pass-word, and counter-sign without which he cannot get on. Each business and trade thus comes to be a kind of free-masonry.

It is related that a person who had once been employed by a clothing firm, afterward gained a button and became an official. Entering a clothing shop in a distant city to make purchases, he heard two employees speak of him (in the trade-brogue) in a highly disrespectful manner. Throwing off his official habiliments, he proceeded to punish the astonished culprits with his fists, in an exemplary manner. Young telegraphic operators in Western lands, rapping out messages to each other upon hotel coffee-cups, have been known to encounter a similar discomfiture. In almost any country but China, the 'code' of such dialects would not long remain a secret. Some enterprising 'reporter' would ferret out the whole mystery, and work it up into a sensational novel. In China there are no reporters and no sensational novels, and the dialectic phenomena go on from age to age without notice or inquiry.

Once more, there is the dialect of the lower and 'dangerous classes,' which is probably to be found in all languages. Every reader will recall in Victor Hugo's '*Les Misérables*' the copious examples of the 'argot' of the Paris street gamins and gutter snipes, as well as those of a like character in Dickens' '*Oliver Twist*,'



These expressions can be easily matched in Chinese, where they are sometimes vaguely called *tiao kan* (調坎), a term often applied also to other forms of expression of a different sort. Here are a few samples, out of hundreds, or very likely thousands which might be collected. Pig=Black-runner (黑跑). Horse=Swift-foot (快脚). Donkey=Devil (鬼子),\* and Donkey's flesh is called devil's meat (鬼子肉). A great many persons=A good mountain (山子好). Drinking tea=Knowing the pool (知池). Wine=Four and Five (四子), i.e., Nine *Chiu* (九) *q.d.* *Chiu* (酒) Wine.†

Here is a snatch of dialogue between two thieves. The one who asks the questions is below, he who answers is on a roof prospecting for a burglary:

Qu. 'Is there any water?' (有水沒有水), i.e. any chance for plunder?

Ans. 'Yes,' (有).

Qu. 'Is it sweet water?' (水甜不甜), i.e., is the prospect good?

Ans. 'Yes' (甜).

Qu. 'Are there any fish?' (有魚沒有魚), i.e., Is there certainly booty?

Ans. 'There is *mien* fish' (有鮓魚), (a slippery fish, without scales), i.e., The prospect is not good after all.

Qu. 'Shall we throw the hook, or not?' (釣不釣), i.e., Shall we try?

\* This nickname is said to be founded upon one of those singular observations of which the Chinese are so fond. It is proverbial that when a horse meets a specter, he starts with terror (馬見鬼直了眼). An ass, however, is alleged to have no fear of goblins, but seems rather pleased to meet them, whence it is a logical inference that a donkey is himself a devil.

† So also in some regions—as in Honan—a millionaire is obliquely called 'Old Grasshead,' on the truly Chinese ground that the character *wan* 萬 ten thousand (*q.d.* *wan-kuan-chia-ts'ia* 萬貫家財) has the grass radical on the top; a characteristic which it shares, however, with some hundreds of other characters. The local dialect of Peking is especially prolific in these tortuous modes of speech, which are frequently collected in little pamphlets and are hawked on the street. There is a tradition of a magistrate named *Ch'en* who was in the habit of promptly punishing any person caught using such secret dialects, by beating on the mouth (打嘴巴). Hence the following verses:—

北京虛子恨人心。羣立街頭恐嚇人。  
口中調坎人難懂。可惜今無嘴巴陳。

'The odious Peking Blackguards on the street,'

'Collect in swarms and bully all they meet,'

'The brogue they talk is understood by none—

'Alas! where now is that mouth-beating *Ch'en*?'



Ans. 'They won't bite' (不上鉤), *i.e.*, it is of no use.

Ans. 'There is *K'uai-tzu* fish,' *i.e.*, easy to catch.

From this oblique use of the terms of the piscatorial art to denote burglary, has arisen the current saying, 'Where there is an abundance of water, there are sure to be plenty of fish,—the only fear is lest one cannot get a bite' (水大魚多只怕不上鉤), *i.e.*, in a fine large mansion there is sure to be sufficient plunder—if only it can be had.\*

The use of this kind of speech, in presence of a third party who cannot comprehend it, is considered by the latter a sufficient provocation for at least *mild* reviling (笑罵) of which the following expression is a sample, 'Men have their language, and beasts have theirs' (人有人言獸有獸語),—*q.d.* it is true I do not understand you, but it is because you are Beasts! Such conversation is called 'a dove that has no eyes,—blind cooing' (沒眼的鴿子, 瞎呱呱) used of persons whose language is unintelligible to bystanders, and also of extravagant talk, lies (瞎話), etc.

The fact that the conversation is intelligible and above-board, may be indicated by the saying: 'Breaking down the partition, and speaking plain language' (打破了壁子說亮話), where however the term 'partition' *pi-tzu* (壁子) is by some regarded as a pun for *pi-tzu* (鼻子) the 'nose,' *q.d.* 'Break his nose off, and it will let daylight into his talk' (打破了鼻子, 說亮話).

This far too extended preface is intended (大題小作) merely to introduce one or two poor little proverbial puns, based upon these secret phrases (私語).

'Li Ts'ui Lien's death,—by hanging' (李翠蓮死, 一吊). This is an allusion to a celebrated woman of the T'ang Dynasty, who lived in the District of *T'eng Hua Hsien* in Shansi. She is represented to have been very devout, and became in fact a pattern of Buddhist good works. Her husband, however, did not approve of her proceedings, and exerted every effort to persuade her to give up her pious practices, but in vain. After a 'domestic unpleasantness of unusual violence, *Li Ts'ui Lien* hung herself, and thus became immortal as a martyr. The Buddhist priests have a

\* The enterprising (but prudent) Reader must not undertake merely on the strength of such a hint as the above, concerning the piscatorial nature of the rogue's dialect, to hold communication by means of it with a band of *bonâ fide* Chinese thieves. His fishing phraseology is not the true thief's 'argot' (although often so represented) but only a species of counterfeit adroitly put as it were on the market to mislead the honest inquirer.

book which bears her name, called the *Ts'ui Lien Pao Chuan* (翠蓮寶卷), setting forth her merits in abandoning her husband and her children, and devoting herself to a life of piety. This book is often chanted at the Buddhist masses known as *ta-chiao* (打醮), which are largely patronized by women. The opening verses relate the determination of *Ts'ui Lien* to fast, her husband's arguments against it and her reply.

The fame of *Tsui Lien* is not confined to the Buddhists, but her story has been made the basis of theatricals, in which are intermingled a great variety of legends, grouped together on no other principle than that of producing the greatest possible dramatic effect. The tale of *Li Ts'ui Lien* has not however stopped even here, but has filtered downward into the nonsense rhymes of Chinese children. The first lines of the Buddhist book referred to, are as follows:

李翠蓮、要吃齋、他丈夫、勸他開。

'The vow of rigid fasting—

'T was *Li Ts'ui Lien* would take it;

Her husband kept exhorting her

To give it up, and break it.'

These words are parodied in the children's verses, as follows:

李翠蓮、要吃秤砣、他丈夫、怕他噎着。

李翠蓮、要吃辣角、他丈夫、怕他辣着。

'Mrs. *Li Ts'ui Lien* was inflexibly bent

On eating a steelyard-weight,

Her husband, however, refused to consent,

For fear she should strangle.

'Madame *Li Ts'ui Lien* she then set a plan

To eat red peppers, of which he took note;

This her husband forbade, like a sensible man,

As he knew they would blister her throat!

The words *Li Ts'ui Lien's* death, in the saying above cited, are employed to suggest the other two characters, in the sense of 'one string of cash' (一吊).

'*Huang Mao's* theatrical play,—three hangings' (黃毛兒的戲三吊). *Huang Mao* (Yellow Hair) was an actor who was noted for his skill in a certain play, of which the plot was as follows:

A typical Chinese mother-in-law treats her daughter-in-law so cruelly that the latter meditates hanging herself to end her



woes. According to Chinese theory the spirits (*kuei* 鬼) of those who meet with any violent death (橫死) are obliged to haunt the spot where the death occurred until they can obtain a substitute (替身). This takes place only when some one else has died in the same place and in the same manner, after which the first spirit is released, and the second takes its place. Not only so, but the first spirit is gifted with the dangerous power of evil suggestion, so that if once its advice gains admittance to the mind, the deluded person is absolutely certain to commit suicide. This accounts for the uninterrupted succession of this class of phenomena.

This daughter-in-law hung herself near a window, and it chanced that about that time a thief arrived to plunder the premises, intending to enter by that window. Finding a dead body blocking the way, he thrusts in his sword, and cuts it down. Now the spirits of the deceased are able not only to suggest suicide to others, but, strange as it may appear, to commit suicide on other people. Else how is to be explained the fact that spirit Number One, who was watching the dangling body, finding it suddenly and inexplicably cut down, at once tied it up again. It was now the thief's turn to be surprised, but he once more severed the rope, whereupon the astonished spirit again tied the woman up. The next time the thief untied the rope and pulled it out of the window, which checkmated the spirit within, who, however, now ascertaining the cause of his annoyance, leaped out and engaged in battle with the thief. This combat lasted until day-break, when the spirit was obliged to retire, leaving the thief badly wounded. The daughter-in-law, thus thrice hung (三吊) was rescued after all, and the mother-in-law was cured of her harshness. 'All's well that ends well.' The saying as quoted, means three thousand cash (三吊).

Our next example is of a pun, not upon two meanings of the same word, but upon a phrase, and a sound without any meaning. 'An old lady calling the cat,—*hua hua*' (老太太叫貓花花的). This is the sound by which cats are summoned. Used to suggest that anything is variegated or flowery in appearance (花的).

The expression *ti-ti-ku-ku* 笛笛呱呱 is a repetitious colloquialism used to signify indecision, like our dilly-dally, shilly-shally, etc. From its resemblance to the cooing made by chickens when confined, we have the following choice paranomasia: 'A musician carrying in his arms a cock, nothing but *ti-ti-ku-ku*'



(吹鼓手抱公雞笛笛呱呱). Used of one who does not know his own mind.

Somewhat similar is the play on a mere sound in the following: 'A hare-lipped mouth blowing out a lamp, puff, puff, puff' (豁子嘴吹燈飛飛飛). His inability to produce anything but the feeble sound of *fei, fei, fei*, suggests the case of one who is given to finding fault, always crying 'Wrong, wrong, wrong!' (非非非).

Here is another example of the same, 'Two hare lips quarrelling, let neither upbraid the other' (兩個豁嘴打架, 肥也別佛肥). The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are supposed to be each hare-lipped. The latter is in the outer room raking out the ashes, when the former from the inner room calls out; 'Who is raking out the ashes?' (誰掏灰). But as persons with this defect cannot pronounce the characters *shui-t'ao-hui*, the sounds as heard are simply: *fei-t'ao-fei* (肥掏飛). The daughter-in-law replies: 'I am raking out the ashes' (我掏灰) but as she is unable to pronounce properly the words *wo-t'ao-hui*, all that her mother-in-law hears is *huo-t'ao-fei* (火掏飛) *q.d.* 'the fire is raking out the ashes.' Upon this the mother-in-law becomes angry, and cries, 'Why do you mock my defect?' The daughter replies, 'We are both in the same condition, neither of us should upbraid the other,' *shui-yeh-pieh-shuo-shui* (誰也別說誰) or, in the dialect of the hare-lipped, *fei-yeh-pieh-fo-fei* (肥也別佛肥). These words are used by a third person to the parties to a quarrel, each of whom is in the wrong. 'You are a brace of quarrelling hare-lips, let neither complain of the other.'

#### PUNS IN WHICH ONE WORD IS USED TO SUGGEST ANOTHER

##### WORD OF THE SAME SOUND.

This class of puns is much larger than those which depend merely upon different meanings of the same word. It is one of the curiosities of the Chinese spoken language that, even in places which are separated by but a slight distance, its pronunciation varies in the most essential points. To an instance of this, in the tones as heard in Tientsin and at Peking, reference has been already made.

No less marked are the changes in other particulars. Many of the initial vowel sounds of Pekingese cease to be initial at Tientsin, some of which, as in most other parts of North China except those

immediately about the capital, are preceded by a nasal twang. Characters which in Pekingese are sounded *cha* and *ch'a*, become in Tientsin *tsa* and *ts'a*. But as this metathesis is a uniform one, it can be condoned. When, however, we reach such sounds as *shao*, *shih*, etc., we strike, what Robert Hall declared Dr. Gill's writings to be, 'A continent of mud.' Many of the sounds of this class are shortened into *sao*, or degraded to a sibilant *ssü*, yet there are numerous exceptions.

It is to this dialectic elegance that we owe the following. A Tientsin man, of whom we have heard before, bought a female red-necked bird, ignorant of the circumstance that the female has no gift of utterance. When his friends pressed him to know if she had not yet emitted any sound, he merely replied, *mei sao* 沒哨, the Tientsin pronunciation of *shao* (哨) to whistle. Hence the saying, 'Yao *ssu*'s female red neck, it would not whistle' (姚四的母紅脖沒有哨). Said of persons without shame, *q.d.* *mei sao* (沒臊).

The following example combines a borrowed sound, and a borrowed meaning: 'A mid-winter turnip [*i.e.* in the third period of nine days after the winter solstice],—the heart is frozen' (三九的蘿蔔凍了心). Met. affected in heart (動了心).

Punning devices to give oblique expression to numerals are very frequent: 'A blind man thrumming a lute,—eight tunes' (瞎子彈絃子, 八板兒), *i.e.*, Eight hundred, *Pa-pai* (八百). 'The *hai lan* flower,—drops its petals' (海藍花掉瓣兒), *i.e.*, Fifteen hundred cash *tiao-pan'rh* (吊半兒).

'The little boat that waits on a steamship,—a sampan' (火輪船上的划子, 三板兒), used for three hundred cash (三百).

It is evident that, this saying must be of recent origin. Proverbs of the sort are doubtless sprouting every day.

The Chinese memory is ideally tenacious of anything relating to cash. In the third year of Hsien Feng (1853) the disturbed state of the Empire necessitated levies of troops. The Salt Commissioner at Tientsin enlisted certain 'Braves,' who were paid four hundred cash a day—the wages of skilled mechanics. Hence, to this day, at that place to say 'The Salt Commissioners' troops,' means four hundred cash (鹽道衙門當勇, 四百錢).

That every one should contribute to the expenses of the weddings and funerals in the families of his relatives and friends, is in



China one of those social postulates which were apparently fixed at the time of the advent of 'the first families.' The wish to seem generous, and at the same time not to be too lavish with one's money, has, perhaps, led to the custom of frequently calling a contribution four times as much as it is—a thousand cash is regarded as a suitable 'share'—*i.e.* 250 cash. Hence to say 'I will give you one share' (給你個份子錢), means, I will give you 250 cash. 'I will give you one hand's cash' (給你個把掌錢), not a handful, but as many as there are fingers on one hand, meaning five, fifty, five hundred, five thousand, etc.

'Two sisters catching locusts,—pressing with both hands' (兩姐妹撲螞蚱, 對搗), *i.e.*, a double five (對五), = *ten*.

'The old man stoops,—to pick up a cash' (老頭子毛腰, 拾大錢), *i.e.*, ten large cash (十大錢).

In China a monkey often goes by the nickname of *Sa-rh*, as we call a rabbit Bunny, or a parrot Poll. The character denoting three, *San* (三) is often colloquially pronounced *Sa*. By the aid of these presuppositions the significance of the following expression, becomes darkly visible (猴兒拉馬, 三兒遛). The monkey is supposed to be leading a horse after the latter has been ridden hard, this is called *liu-ma* (遛馬). The three final characters are intended to be pronounced *Sa-rh-liu*, and give a dim hint of the meaning. On hearing a person say: 'a monkey leading a horse,' one must supply the predicate 'three six,' *Sa-liu* (三, 六) which means six and thirty cash.\*

Another equally unintelligible method of indicating an amount of money is by an oblique expression, which, while to an outsider conveying no meaning whatever, to the initiated at once suggests the sum meant. The Chinese have a series of signs, resembling a deaf-and-dumb alphabet, to denote numbers. From one to five are naturally indicated by the fingers of one hand held up. The fingers of the whole hand bent signify *six*, the thumb and the two nearest fingers denote *seven*, the thumb and fore-finger opened out (to represent the *Pa* (八) character upside down) mean *eight*, while the forefinger bent stands for *nine*.

If the amount to be named is *two*, two hundred, two thousand, etc., and the parties do not wish to let bystanders know the sum,

\* *Sa-rh-liu*, *ssu-rh-liu*, etc., are the common and abbreviated pronunciations of 三十六, 四十六, etc.



they perhaps say (挽眼嘎), i.e., 'An eye-gouge.' This, not too perspicuous phrase, means that as in digging out eyes, *two fingers* would be extended (one for each eye) the hearer is to understand that *two fingers* are held out to show the sum which is therefore *two hundred cash*!

The same information is conveyed with equal obscurity, by the expression, 'One hundred fish' (一百魚). Here the person addressed must be aware that the reference is to the *picture of a fish* on a wall. Now the saying runs: 'A fish on a wall has but one eye' (牆上的魚一隻眼), that is, a fish cannot be depicted on the Chinese plan upon a flat surface so as to show both eyes. Hence the expression may be used to denote a person with only one eye, or it may signify (as here) there *is* another eye only it is not in sight. An hundred fish (on an hundred walls) would have an hundred eyes, therefore to mention 'an hundred fish' would appear to hint at an hundred cash, which would also have 'an hundred eyes.' But the fish have another hundred eyes on the other side (of the wall), hence the true and secret reference is to another hundred cash, to wit *two hundred cash*!

The Chinese, as is well known, pay great attention, not only to one's age, but to his rank in his own family as first, second, etc. *Lao I* (老一) No. 1, *Lao Erh* (老二) No. 2, etc., following the surname, form a convenient style of appellation in general use.\* Such titles could not escape running the gauntlet of puns.

'A Stone of antiquity,—an old mountain' (多年的石頭, 老山). This is another of those puns which are peculiar to one dialect; it would pass current only where (as at Tientsin) *Shan* (山) is pronounced *san*. Hence for No. three (老三).

'An ancient temple,—old monastery' (多年的古廟, 老寺), for *Lao Ssu* (老四) No. 4. So also in *Miao-shang-miao* (廟上廟), *miao* (廟) is used to suggest *Ssu* (寺), and the whole suggests

\* This habit of designating individuals simply by a number, leads to perpetual uncertainties as to the person meant. When a reading man is dubbed *Ssu Hsien Sheng* (四先生) merely because he happens to be the fourth in the family, and when every woman who has married a number four, is called *Ssu Sao* (四嫂) confusion is inevitable. "If the man is well disposed, as you say," said the writer to a visitor, "why does he never come to see us?" To this inquiry the only reply was the fingers of one hand held up in a mysterious but significant manner, but without a word. To a foreigner, such a deaf mute sign would convey absolutely no meaning, but a Chinese understands at once that something was wrong between the person in question, and a man who was number four (老四).

(四十四), *i.e.*, aged 44. 'A woman the companion of more than half one's life,—an old wife' (多半世的婦人, 老妻), for *Lao Ch'i* (老七) No. 7.

'The ancient product of *Shao Hsing Fu*,—old wine' (多年的紹興, 老酒) for *Lao Chiu* (老九) No. 9.

The characters meaning 'face' (*lien* 臉 and *mien* 面) in the sense of self-respect, are common subjects of puns, of which some have been already cited. Here is another: 'The seller of prune pudding with nothing left but the prunes,—he has lost his flour' (賣切糕的竟騰了棗, 沒麪), for *mei-mien* (沒面) *no face*.

The character designating Right or Reason, *Li* (理) which is always upon the lips of every Chinese (however wrong or unreasonable he may be) is a target for many puns.

'Both hands full of birth-day sweetmeats,—he has a gift,' (兩手捧壽桃, 有禮), of one in the right, *yu-li* (有理). Quite the reverse is the following: 'The Sect of White Clothes\* drinking wine,—disobeying the rules' (白衣道喝酒, 反禮了), of one who violates the right, *Fan-li* (反理).

'It is better to be strong on the outside, than strong on the inside' (裏壯不如表壯),† *i.e.*, it is better to be able to carry one's point than to be in the right—in an ironical sense 'might makes right' (理壯不如表壯).

'Wearing a wadded garment with the wadding ripped out,—no inside' (拆了棉花去穿大褂, 沒有裏), *i.e.*, altogether in the wrong (沒有理).

'Like the cloth that wraps one's feet,—each side is inside' (屬包腳布的, 反正都是裏). Of one who under all circumstances makes himself appear to be in the right (反正都是理).

\* This is a famous Sect, the members of which are called *Tsai-li* (在禮), also written (在理). Their rules forbid smoking both of opium and tobacco and wine drinking. They are ostensibly a Total Abstinence Society, and flourish especially at Tientsin, notwithstanding the fact that they have been rigorously suppressed by the authorities, by whom they are regarded with extreme suspicion. Their singular costume—which is that of mourning—has excited general ridicule. They are said to have been once known generally by the name quoted above in the proverb, *Pai I Tao*, or Sect of the White Clothes, but this gave occasion to the profane to ridicule them with the nickname of *Pai-i-pa-tao* (白尾把道) or Sect of the White Tail, in allusion to the white cord braided into their queues. The term *Tsai-li* was therefore substituted. It is in allusion to their dress that another proverb runs: 'He who joins the White Clothes Sect wears mourning although his grandfather is not dead' (入了白衣道, 不死老爺也穿孝).

† Also rendered 表壯不如裏壯 in the sense it is more important that the wife be 'strong' than the husband.



The Chinese tendency to deceit gives rise to sundry plays upon the *Huang* (謊) character.

'The melon exposed to the sun,—more than half yellow' (向太陽的甜瓜, 黃了一半了), half false (謊了一半).

'A lama's cap,—half yellow' (喇嘛的帽子, 黃了一半) same as the last.

'Vegetable leaves grown in the sun,—yellow' (太陽地的菜子, 黃了), false.

The chronic want of cash often comes to light.

'A hump-back's garment,—short in front' (鑼鍋腰裁袍子, 前短), *i.e.*, short of money (錢短).

'A hump-back climbing a mountain,—tight in front' (鑼鍋腰上山, 前緊). *q.d.* (錢緊).

'Going south at noon,—no shadow in front' (晌午朝南走, 沒有前影). *i.e.*, not a trace of any money (沒有錢影).

The character signifying to meditate, hope, or expect, receives its full share of attention.

'Making rope at midnight,—one's thoughts are on hemp' (半夜打繩子, 想麻了), *i.e.*, what are you thinking about? (想嗎).

'A soldier hallooing the street,—no rations' (當兵的叫街, 沒餉了). *q.d.* no expectations (沒想了).

'An iron fire-cracker,—makes no sound' (鐵炮, 響不開). *i.e.*, cannot think it out (想不開).

'Water in the back boiler,—no sound of boiling' (後鍋裏的水, 響不開). In some tea-shops there are double boilers, but the water in the rear one is too far from the fire to boil (想不開), like the last.

'The old villager who does not understand rams-horn fire-crackers,—the sound goes up to heaven' (莊家老兒不認羊角炮, 響到天上去了). In this form of fireworks one explosion takes place on the ground, and one high in the air, of unfounded anticipation.

'You are only half the proper amount of gunpowder,—no sound' (你是火藥短一半, 沒響頭了), *i.e.*, having no hopes (沒想頭了).

'You are a fowling piece exchanged for fireworks,—the sound louder than before' (你是鳥槍換砲, 響頭越發大了), *i.e.*, one's hopes wilder than ever (想頭越發大了).



'Allowing the duck to escape,—and trying to seize the goose' (現放着鴨子不拿,要拿鵝). Of one who refuses an opportunity for gain, in order to practice extortion (拿訛).

A knob growing on a duck's head,—it must be a goose's head' (鴨子頭上長疙疸,是個鵝頭), *i.e.*, a chief extortioner (訛頭).

'Elegant drawings! They should be pasted on a southern wall!' (好書貼在南牆上). Said in derision of one who thinks whatever he says is right; *q.d.* fine talk (好話).

'A tiger turning his body,—no neck' (老虎大轉身,沒有脖子). The tiger is supposed to have no neck, and is hence obliged to turn his whole body. Met. of one who cannot refuse a request, however unwilling to comply (沒有駁兒).

'He is a sea-crab,—huge nippers' (他也算是海螃蟹,大夾兒); although at present young and crude, he is not to be lightly esteemed, since he belongs to an important family (大家).

'Your whole body covered with boils,—you are an individual with much *matter*' (渾身生瘡,你是個膿人). This is said sarcastically, with reference to one who pretends to universal accomplishments; 'truly you are an able fellow.' (你是個能人).

'A chicken's bill pecking at a glass bottle,—one is pointed, the other slippery' (雞嘴啄玻璃瓶子,又尖又滑). Met. of one who is crafty and deceitful (又奸又滑).

'Chicken feathers tied on a flag-staff,—what a large dust-brush!' (旗杆上綁雞毛,好大掸子). Met. of a person of great courage (好大膽子).

In Western languages proper names offer a wide field for puns. Who has not heard, for example, of 'the shortest man in the Bible'—Knee High Miah, or of his still more successful competitor, Bildad the Shoe Height? Similar plays on names are sometimes—though apparently not with great frequency—met with in China. Thus:—

'The general of *Liang Shan*,—*Wu-yung*' (梁山的軍師吳用). Met. useless (無用).

'The local god\* falling into the river,—a wet divinity' (土地爺掉在河裏,濕神), *i.e.*, out of spirits (失神).

\* In Mencius (Bk. I. Pt. II. xv. i.) occurs the expression, 'What the barbarians want is my territory,' the last two words being represented by the four characters *Wu-t'u-ti-yeh* (吾土地也). These characters are often seen over the entrance to the temple to the local god, where they are by an easy pun appropriated to the divinity himself, signifying, 'I am T'u Ti.'

No matter how long you talk, it will be only a porpoise,—white feet' (說了半天算是江猪, 白蹄). This fish is believed to have 'white hoofs and claws.' Met. of useless asking, etc. (白題).

'Eating too much fat,—nauseated' (吃了葷了, 膩了). Met. of one who is disturbed because matters do not go right (逆了).

'The whole ones all sold,—nothing left but remnants' (整的賣完了, 竟剩下末末了). Of one who has no employment, and roams leisurely (閑行磨磨).

'Searching through the street for chicken feathers to make a duster' (滿街上找雞毛, 湊掸子). Met. of those who gather courage by collecting numbers (湊胆子).

'Boiling water poured on your head,—let us see how you will endure such an irrigation' (開水從頭倒, 看你經澆不經澆). Met. 'Let us see if you are worth associating with' (經交).

'The nephew lighting a lantern to give light to his uncle' (外甥打燈籠照舅), *i.e.*, the same as before (照舊).

'An ear of Indian maize, carried in the girdle,—not gnawed' (玉米棒子, 攬在腰裏, 不齧), of one who is unwilling (不肯).

'Twenty-five ounces of silver,—half a packet' (二十五兩, 半封), of one who is half insane (半瘋).

'A camel going to the house-top,—a tall beast' (駱駝上房, 高獸). Used of great age (高壽).

'The tailor who has no food to eat,—pawns his needle' (裁縫沒有飯吃, 當針). Used of anything certainly true (當真).

'A bitter herb in a drug-shop,—see your little thistle' (藥舖的苦菜, 看你這小薊兒). Thistles, as occurring in the Chinese pharmacopeia, are of two varieties, the large and the small. The latter are here mentioned, to suggest a word signifying capacity, talent, *chi* (技); that is say, 'what contemptible abilities are yours' (你這個小技兒).

'Matching the fractures in a broken bone' (打折了骨頭要對叉). Bringing ends together to unite them is spoken of to suggest the idea of tracing out an error (對差), as in accounts. Used of any circumstances in which differences are adjusted.

Small onions mixed with bean-curd,—very blue and very white' (小蔥子拌豆腐, 青青白白). The onions are of an azure blue, while the bean-curd is (a dirty) white. Used of anything which is entirely lucid (清白).



'Lying on one's back, and working on an image,—dexterous drawing' (仰巴脚兒要塑神, 巧畫), *i.e.*, apt words (巧話).

'The jar containing pickled bean-curd,—it has no bamboo frame' (醬豆腐罈子, 沒有筊子). Jars which are exported from the south of China, generally have a loose basket-work frame of bamboo called a *lao* (筊). Those which are used to hold only pickled bean-curd have no such frame. The saying is used like the last to indicate one who has no resources (沒有落子).

'Old Mrs. Mêng going to see her daughter,—in a bad way' (孟奶奶看閨女, 爛了). This woman's daughter had an ulcer, which passed into the malignant form. When the mother returned from her visit, on being asked how her daughter was she compendiously replied, *lan-la* (爛了) 'Broken,' *i.e.*, the ulcer was running. Used of anything which is in a condition of confusion (亂了) or of fruit, etc., which is decayed (爛了).

'An old lady spreading out the cards,—and winning' (老太太鋪牌, 爛了). The term *Hu* (爛), is used of cards or dominoes which match those laid down, thus winning. The saying is employed of one who is in extreme distress, as it were scorched, burnt black (爛了).

'Wadding a double garment,—stitching and quilting' (袂襖緒棉花, 勾引). The robe is first sewed at the edges (勾) and then the cotton lining can be quilted (引). Used of any temptation to evil (搆引).

'The King of Corea,—an outside province' (高麗國的王子, 外省), that is, a nephew on the wife's side (外甥).

'A boat-load of pickled fish,—do not add salt' (鹹魚船, 莫打鹽), *i.e.*, 'Do not speak' (莫打言).

'Cooking food in the briny fluid of bean-curd,—you need not use salt' (豆腐滿作菜, 不用鹽), that is, 'There is no need of words' (不用言).

'A little knife stuck in the side, but not cutting the heart' (小刀子插到肋窩裏, 並不割心). Of anything not 'laid to heart' (不攔心).

'The woodpecker flies to the top of the flag-staff, thinking to sit on a tall peg' (\*敲打木子飛到旗杆頂上想坐高樑). Of one who hopes to enjoy a high position (坐高爵).

\* More often called *pen ta mu tzu* (鉤打木子), as in the phrase 鉤打木子死在樹窟窿裏, 吃了嘴的虧喇. The woodpecker dies in the hole of a tree, injured by his own bill—of persons who suffer from the results of their own talk, especially for continually 'pecking at' others.



'The Fourth Assistant Magistrate is still a higher dignitary than the Second Assistant Magistrate, since he has two teeth more' (四衙却比二衙大, 四衙比二衙多倆牙). This *jeu d'esprit* is based upon a pun on the *ya* (衙, 牙) characters. *Erh-ya*, *San-ya*, and *Ssu-ya*, Second, Third and Fourth Assistant, are terms denoting subordinates who relieve the District Magistrate of some of the unimportant cases within his jurisdiction.

'A three year old Mohammedan,—a small *Pa-erh*' (三歲的回回, 小爸兒). The Mohammedans are styled *Pa-erh* (from a word of their own tongue) as an appendage to the name, *Chang Pa-erh*, *Ma Pa-erh*, etc. [In the case of those named *Wang*, where the combination would be singularly infelicitous, another character is inserted, as *Wang Ta Pa Erh*, etc.] The expression signifies a small handful of anything (小把兒).

'A broken tea-pot in a hospital,—both poor and trickling' (養病堂裏的破茶壺, 又窮又滴搭). The expression *ti-ta* (滴搭) is used of anything always dripping, as the eaves of a house, etc. It is intended to suggest the phrase *ti-ta* (低耷) which signifies very poor and inferior. Barbers and other 'low crafts' are called *ti-ta-shou-i* (低耷手藝).

'Do not steam bread,—put forth your best efforts' (別蒸饅頭, 爭口氣). The expression *cheng-k'ou-ch'i* is commonly used of quarrels and disputes. Here, however, it is employed in the sense of being stirred to rivalry, as for instance, when one is struggling to learn, and though discouraged by some one who declares that the effort is a mere waste of time, determines to succeed; this might be called *cheng-k'ou-ch'i*. The first clause is affixed only for the sake of the pun in the character *Cheng* 'to steam.'

'New cards—two candles—gambling on credit, but the keeper of the establishment must first be paid' (新牌, 兩支蠟, 賒賭現抽頭). Cards, dominoes, etc., are called *p'ai* (牌). The supposition is that the players have a new set of these, and a pair of candles. Most people who gamble do so on 'the credit system,' each person keeping a record of his gains and losses without paying at the time any money. But the percentage on the stakes, due to the keeper of the gambling house (賭博場), say three cash in every hundred played for, must be paid in ready money. This is called 'taking the fee' (抽頭). The whole expression signifies only that

anything—as for example a theatrical play—is newly arranged (新排), or in the language of the stage *cast*.

'A barber's carrying pole,—neither long nor round' (剃頭的扁担, 長圓不了). Met. of an enterprise which cannot last (長遠不了).

'Military Yamens,—no cangue' (武職的衙門, 沒有枷). Martial punishments being so much more severe than civil ones, there is no place for the wooden collar. Of one with no home (沒有家).

'You two are red peppers and anise-seed,—two flavors' (你兩個是花椒大料二味). This is a species of sarcastic banter (改人的話), directed at persons who have no claim to be addressed by the 'numerative of scholars and gentlemen,' *q.d.* 'fine gentlemen you two are?' (二位).

'Living in a rented house,—where is there any deed?' (賃房子住那裏有契). It is only when houses are purchased, or taken in pawn that the deed is in the occupants' possession. Used by one who is remonstrated with for being angry, and who replies: 'Where is there any anger?' (那裏有氣).

'Wu Tu Lang carrying an ornamental portal on his shoulder,—he cannot support a large framework' (武大郎挑牌坊, 擔不起大架子). Used of one who has not courage enough to 'carry off a grand style' 擔不起大架子.

'Taking a willow-wood bushel upon the city wall, and bawling,—a high pint, and a high measure' (帶着柳斗上城壕高升高較的). The bushel (斗) which is taken up to an elevation, is used, as in one of the Picture Puns already described, to suggest *sheng* (升) a pint, and this in turn is a play on the *sheng* (聲), signifying 'sound,' as *chiao* (較) a measure, is a pun on *chiao* (叫) to call, *i.e.*, lofty speech, and honorable treatment (高聲高叫).

'Prunes measured in the shell of a turtle,—what kind of a pint is that?' (甲魚蓋子量棗兒, 什麼升兒). Of discordant or displeasing tones—what 'sort of a sound is that' (什麼聲兒).

To accommodate the Buddhists and others who refuse to eat flesh, there are certain eating houses which make a specialty of excluding every form of animal food from their bills of fare. In some of them, however, is served a sort of soup, known as 'skimmer-soup' (蔬湯) which has a more or less pronounced flavor of chicken



and pork. Hence the following proverb, 'The vegetarian restaurant selling skimmer-soup,—two kinds of meat' (素館裏賣筋湯二葷). Used of a second marriage (二婚). ~

The impression prevails, however, notwithstanding the theoretical abstinence of Buddhist priests as regards animal food, that their diet is of the most liberal nature. By his rules the priest ought to *fast* (持齋 or 吃齋) so far as the five kinds of meat are concerned (五葷), *i.e.*, that of the cow, horse, dog, goose, and pigeon, together with certain rank vegetables, such as onions, garlic, etc. What they are known actually to do, however, is indicated by the sarcastic phrases 'Meat-eating-priests' (五葷和尚) and 'Wine and flesh priests' (酒肉和尚).

In the two following sayings, the question is supposed to be put direct to the priest, whether he eats meat and drinks wine, which is likewise *tabooed*. An ambiguous reply is put into his mouth which means much more than it says, 'Priest, do you eat meat, or do you abstain?' (和尚你吃肉不吃呢). To this he seems to answer, 'Priests do not eat it' (僧不吃). What he ought to say, and is understood to say, however, is quite different, 'If it is *raw*, I do not eat it' (生不吃). Where the Tientsin pronunciation prevails, in which *Sheng* (生) is pronounced *Seng*, the pun is perfect. The other inquiry is similar, 'Priest, do you drink wine, or do you refrain?' (和尚喝酒不喝). To this question the apparent response is, 'I certainly do not drink it' (最不喝). What is to be understood, however, is more truthful: 'When I am *drunk*, I stop drinking' (醉不喝).

'A widow covering herself with a thin quilt,—no intention of putting wadding inside' (寡婦蓋狹被沒心績). Used of a widower who does not intend to marry a second time, or as the phrase goes to 'add another fiddle string' (沒心績弦).

'To go about reading the sacred books over the dead' (要去轉咒去). To read books for the dead (念死人的經), is known as *chuan chou* '轉咒' because of the continuous circuits made by the priests when performing the ceremony. The expression is used of one who applies in vain to one after another of his acquaintances for help in an emergency, and who is thus obliged to 'make the circuit' (轉週) before he can get anything.

'Taking medicine on a spatula,—no water employed' (吃藥用押舌子, 不灌). If the bitter dose is put far back at the base of



the tongue, it is unnecessary to use water to wash it down (不灌). Used of anything with which one is unfamiliar (不貫).

On the principle, doubtless, that 'Within the Four Seas all are Brethren,' natives of the southern provinces of China, as already remarked, are ridiculed at the north—called in fact 'Foreign Barbarians' (洋蠻子). Hence the saying: 'The Southerner looking at theatricals,—a different kind' (洋蠻子看戲異樣), different, that is, from what he sees at home. Used, by a happy reversal of meaning, to signify whatever is of the same sort (一樣).

The Southerner discharging a fire-cracker,—a fine sound' (洋蠻子放炮好響頭). Of one whose hopes are on too grand a scale (好想頭).

'The man who pushes a wheelbarrow, picking up a girdle,—he has a strap' (推小車的拾了根褡包,有褡了). Those who trundle heavy loads on barrows, distribute the weight by a band over the shoulders. In this case the band is supposed to have been lost, when a girdle is picked up, which answers the purpose. Used of one who, after being in great trouble, sees at length a dawn of hope (有了盼子).

'Rats in a cash-shop,—stealing bills' (錢舖裏的耗子,盜帖). This is used to suggest another phrase, which signifies that something additional is given, above what was to be expected. Thus when an exchange of goods is made, and money is paid to even the bargain, this is called *Tao-t'ieh* (倒帖). In like manner, one who has been well cheated in trade,—or otherwise—and is then beguiled into paying money in addition, is said *tao-t'ieh*—to reverse the payment.

A similar play on this phrase occurs in another saying: 'The old man from the country mounting scroll couplets,—he posts them wrong side up' (莊家老兒粘對聯,倒帖兒). He cannot read, and so to him one way is as right as another (反正都是理).

The Chinese are fond of holding Festivals in honor of some divinity, or perhaps for mere sport. All kinds of entertaining exhibitions are furnished to amuse the multitudes thus collected. One of the gatherings of this sort at Tientsin, is known—from the locality at which it collects—as the *Hui* at the west of the Dragon Pavilion (龍亭西). One of the apparatus there employed to divert the multitude is called a *shih-pu-hsien* (拾不閑), i.e., 'picking up and never idle,' a framework furnished with strings, by pulling

which an interminable succession of sounds is produced from drums and cymbals which in some invisible manner are beaten. One of the managers (會首) of this entertainment was named *Hsin* (辛) and he had gained the nickname (外號兒) of *Hsin-pu-ching* (辛不淨), 'Impure in heart.' This circumstance gave rise to a local saying as follows: 'The exhibition at the *Lung Ting Hsi*,—the heart not clean' (龍亭西的拾不開心不淨).

'*Wang Hsiao Erh* at New Year's time,—we remember what was said' (王小兒過年, 咱記話). This refers to a theatrical play, in which *Wang* and his wife are represented as having come to the New Year season with absolutely no provisions in the house. This state of things, at a time when all the world is supposed to eat, drink, and be merry, and when for a considerable time the markets are entirely closed and no work is done, naturally led to a domestic 'unpleasantness' (嘲鬧).

Now the proverb runs: 'Nothing but cakes to eat on New Year's eve [the 30th of the 12th moon],—not so good as having no New Year's at all' (三十晚上吃餅子, 不及不年下). The outcome of the quarrel, however, was an agreement that whichever of them first spoke an audible word, should be responsible for the food of both for the entire year.

Soon after, their nephew comes to pay the ordinary New Year salutations, and is amazed to find that neither uncle nor aunt speak, either to each other or to him. Much exercised over this strange state of things, he reports the case to the District Magistrate, who orders *Wang* and his wife before him for examination as to the reason for their silence. On finding that they make no answer whatever, the Magistrate is as surprised as the nephew had been, and also angry, ordering the man to be beaten twenty blows for 'contempt of court.' Upon this *Wang* feigns to be dead, upon which his wife begins to weep over him in the Chinese manner, in her grief calling upon the departed in loud wail. As soon as he heard his wife's voice, *Wang* jumps up laughing, and cries: 'We remember our agreement (咱記話), you owe me one year's food!' The phrase is used of persons who are not upon good terms, and whose language is sure to give mutual offense (話不投機). They therefore agree to break off all communication (咱忘話). The proposition to do so is conveyed in the words, '*Wang Hsiao Erh*



spending New Year's,' the rest, as in multitudes of such expressions being understood.

'Bells on one's toes,—a sound at every step' (腳指頭上掛鈴鐺, 走一步, 響一步), *i.e.*, consider upon each step before you take it (走一步, 想一步).

'This is a bolus of supernatural efficacy,—only a little pill' (靈寶如意丹, 小丸兒), said by one who has raised a disturbance, but who wishes to convey the idea that what he has done is a mere bagatelle compared to what he might do, and will do at another time, in fact 'only a little play' (小玩兒).

'Frozen bean-curd,—cannot be cut' (凍豆腐, 拌不開). Fig. the cash is insufficient, the thing cannot be done (辦不開).

'An old lady's staff,—a support for one' (老太太的拐杖, 扶人), Met. happy man (福人).

'The carpenter takes his axe,—inadequate for a saw' (木匠拿斧子, 不穀一鋸). Met. no complete sense in what is said (不穀一句).

'Dividing a board with a prune stone,—how many cuts can you make?' (棗核子解板, 你可有幾鋸呢). Of one who has no capacity for speech but who insists on talking, 'how many sentences can you make?' (你可以有幾句呢).

'The old villager having never seen cherries,—what small apricots!' (莊家老兒未見過櫻桃, 小杏兒, Met. of a man of a testy, irascible temper (小性兒).

'Chou-erh's donkeys,—living animals' (周二家的驢子, 活獸兒). Chou-erh was a Tientsin man in the reign of Tao Kuang, who was in the habit of equipping fourteen donkeys which he owned, in a singular costume on occasion of the annual fair of the Niang Niang temple (天后宮). His animals were made to represent lions, tigers, dragons, *Ch'i-lin*, etc., by their strange masks. Yet they were living animals (活獸) after all. Used of one who suffers punishment in this life (活受).

'The old villager buying poisonous salts,—arsenic' (莊家老兒買紅礬, 信石). *Hsin-shih* is a designation of this mineral. Metaphorically, of one who is sincere (信寔).

'*Chu pa chieh* drinking the water in which a knife has been ground,—rusty inside' (豬八戒喝礮刀的水, 內銹), applied to one of inferior external appearance but of great talent (內秀).



'The water-carrier turns his head and goes by the well' (挑水的回頭過了井咧). Met. of one whose better days are past (過了景咧).

'The Shou Hsing Lao-'erh riding a donkey,—no deer available' (壽星老兒騎驢沒有鹿了). The *Shou Hsing Lao* to whom reference has been already made, is fabled to have bestridden a deer. Used of one in distress, no way out (沒有路).

'Riding a deer, and holding on by the horns, never once descending from one's steed the whole way' (騎着鹿，搬着甲，一路不下馬). A man who walks, is often said in banter, to 'ride the road' (騎路), to which expression the phrase 'riding a deer' is meant to refer.

'The priest in the temple of Happiness-and-prosperity-to-the State,—he did not beg for money' (福興邦的和尙沒有化). This is a temple in Peking to the god of War (關帝) which was erected without the aid of the customary vows and begging on the part of its priests (化緣). Used of any occasion when there is nothing to be said (沒有話).

'Yao Ssu's finger nails,—never trimmed.' (姚四的指甲沒修). Met. without shame (沒羞).

'A monkey seizing the shears,—indiscriminate cutting' (猴兒拿剪子，瞎鉸). Met. reckless disturbance (瞎攪).

'The confinement of the *Yüan-pao-ho*,—produces a bat' (元寶賀坐月子，養蝠). This poetical name for the bat, 'Gift of an ingot of sycee'\* is due to the identity in sound between the character for bat, and that for happiness, as already noticed under Picture Puns. Used of one with many virtuous children and grandchildren, i.e., he has 'reared up happiness' (養福).

'The confinement of the weevil in the green bean,—produces a little worm' (綠豆蠅坐月子，抱蛆). Used of one who constantly suffers injury (抱屈).

'A single cash worth of wine,—how can it be burned?' (一個錢的燒酒，怎麼燎). Met. how is the thing to be finished? (怎麼了).

'The stone cutting the mountain,—stone strikes stone' (拿着石頭砍山，石打石的). So also, 'Rolling a stone roller down

\* "Some wonder what the cause can be  
That Chinese silver's called 'sycee,'  
But probably they call it so  
Because they 'sigh' to 'see' it go!"

the mountain,—stone strikes stone' (山上輥礮軸, 石打石). Met. 'quite so, quite so' (寔打寔的).

'The old villager has never seen scroll couplets,—they do not seem to be pictures' (莊家老兒未見過對聯, 不是畫). Met. disjointed talk (不是話).

'A child in the twelfth moon,—frozen hands and frozen feet' (臘月的孩子, 凍手凍腳的). Met. of one who puts himself into active motion, as in gymnastic exercise, etc. (動手動腳的).

'A skimmer hung upon one's breast,—to dip out the heart' (笨羅掛在胸脯上, 撈心). Met. much trouble (勞心).

'A camel on a mountain,—a large foot' (上山的駱駝, 好大蹄). Met. of a comprehensive subject, etc. (好大題), and also in ridicule of any one's large feet—like a camel's hoof.

'A monkey embracing a guitar,—lawless thrumming' (猴抱琵琶, 亂彈). Met. wild talk (亂談).

'The nurse women of *San Ho Hsien*,—high caps' (三河縣的老媽, 高冠). A city in Chihli east of Peking noted for the tall head-dress of the women. Met. lofty official promotion (高官).

'A pheasant wearing a cap,—false pretense of being a falcon' (which are hooded to sharpen their eyesight): (野雞戴帽兒, 混充鷹). Met. of one who falsely pretends to bravery (混充英).

'Wearing a skin robe wrong side out,—false pretense of being a sheep' (反穿皮襖, 混充羊). Met. of one who is poor, but who makes an empty display (混充揚).

'Little cabbages,—picked again' (小白菜, 再揀), *i.e.*, the yellow leaves must be removed repeatedly. Met. of meeting at another time (再見).

'A thin walnut,—a full kernel' (薄核桃, 滿仁). Met. crowded with people (滿人).

'Like the flowering-almond and deer's horns,—many branches' (屬梅花鹿角的, 叉兒到不少). Met. abounding in mistakes (差兒到不少).

◆ 'The tinker putting on his glasses,—looking for cracks' (小爐匠帶眼鏡, 找叉兒). Met. seeking for faults (找差兒) similar to (吹毛求疵), 'blowing the fur to detect flaws.'

'*Wu Ta Lang* drawing a seed-planter,—reckless cultivation along the whole furrow' (武大郎拉耩, 一溜胡耩). Met. of incoherent explanations (一溜胡講).



'My boiler is too small,—I cannot cook this in it' (鍋小, 煮不了). Met. of one who cannot control a matter (主不了).

'A gourd growing in a kettle,—no room to boil' (砂吊裏長葫蘆, 煮不開). Same as the last—no managing the business (主不開).

'You are the twenty-four Patterns of Filial Obedience,—a highly Virtuous Man' (你是二十四孝, 大賢人), i.e., you are an idle fellow (大閑人).

'Let idlers remain outside, and the virtuous enter; let thieves keep away, and lovers of good doctrine come' (閑人免進賢人進, 盜者莫來道者來).

'The boiler-mender shakes his head,—he dare not drive a nail' (小爐兒匠的搖頭, 不敢釘). Met. not venturing to decide (不敢定).

'Carrying a lantern to winnow wheat,—sets the threshing floor on fire' (打着燈籠揚麥子, 照場). Met. just as usual (照常).

'A garden cabbage,—grows in its garden plot' (園子裏的白菜, 在畦). Met. of a Manchu (who belongs to one of the Eight Banners) (在旗).

'The old villager playing chess,—takes a pawn' (莊家老下旗, 喫個卒). Met. of one who eats to repletion (喫個足).

'A ferry behind an ancient grave,—an ancestral boat' (老墳後頭撐擺渡, 祖船). Met. of things handed down from generation to generation (祖傳).

'Eight hundred cash fallen into a well,—you will never recover the whole string' (of 1,000) (八百錢掉在井裏, 摸不着那一吊). Met. of bad singers, who cannot get the tune (摸不着那一調).

[This saying, applied to the Chinese race, fits—as the lady remarked of her new dress—as if they had been melted and poured in. If there is in China any such thing as singing, it may safely be said never to come to the ears of foreigners. The Chinese character which means 'to sing' very appropriately likewise signifies 'to crow.' The shrill falsetto cackling which the Chinese style singing, is, to those who have never heard it, quite indescribable. Those who have heard it require no description. The attempt on the part of Chinese—except in the case of children whose voices are not yet formed—to learn any simple foreign tune, frequently gives rise to dramatic experiences. In singing it is literally every one for himself; "Each wandering in a different way, but all the downward



road." Time and tune as foreigners understand these terms, are as incomprehensible to the untaught Chinese, as the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions. The foreign leader, however, enjoys over choristers in almost any other part of the habitable globe, one marked advantage. He can sing a tune adapted to any particular meter, to a stanza of any other meter; he can change the key, the pitch, or even the tune, without exciting in his fellow warblers any suspicion of unfair dealing. "Stop," suddenly cried an irascible clergyman to his choir, who were wrestling with a fugue tune to a stanza ending: 'And let my voice in silence die'—"Let that voice in silence die! If the Angels in Heaven could hear you sing, they would wring your little necks off!" It is fortunate for Chinese choirs that 'the angels in heaven' seem to take no particular notice of what is transpiring in the Celestial Kingdom.] That the Chinese themselves appreciate the value of some of their own choral performances, one of their proverbs will show, in which ridicule is thrown on an unskilful singer by comparison with the ambitious hybrid from Shansi, a province which often appears to be, as was said of Horace Greeley—"the National Game." 'A Shansi mule imitating a horse's whinny,—a southern air and a northern tune' (山西的騾子學馬叫, 南腔北調).

The names of places, which in English only occasionally serve for puns (as the Hungary baby going first to Lapland, and then to Brest) are easily turned to account in Chinese, because nearly all of them have a significance of their own. They are sometimes employed also, to suggest other words of the same sound. For example 'Passing *Huai Lu*, and going west,—*Ching Hsing*' (過了獲鹿往西走, 井陘). *Ching Hsing* is the first district city west of *Huai Lu*, a town which stands at the entrance of the *Ku Kuan* (固關) pass, between Chihli and Shansi. The expression is used of anything which is perfectly feasible, *Ching-hsing* (竟行).

The same idea is embodied in another local proverb, which runs, '*En Hsien* bread cakes,—they are prepared lying down' (恩縣的饅頭, 躺行). Bread cakes are made of flour raised with yeast, and are afterward worked into the desired shape, which is generally that of an inverted tea-cup. In the *En Hsien* region (in Shantung) these cakes are often made long and thick, like a Chinese candle. After being molded, they are placed in a warm

place and covered, a process which is called to *hsing* (行一行). As the long cakes could not be set on end without falling over, they are prepared lying down (躺行), and afterwards steamed. The phrase is used in that region to suggest another which denotes that a thing can be done as easily as water runs (湯行).

Puns of this kind present an almost exact correspondence with a variety of conundrum, in which the name of a place is to be guessed from an oblique description: as, 'Splitting kindling under a bench,—hard to raise the hatchet' (板櫟底下劈劈柴, 難揚斧), i.e., *Nan Yang Fu* (南陽府) in Honan. The cities of China have all been handled in this way probably thousands of times. Whatever new combinations may be hit upon, are annually exhibited on the New Year's lanterns, for the exercise of the wits of the spectators.

The Classics are not safe from the invasion of puns. Our old friend the Peach-tree in the Book of Odes, is made to do duty in this way, 'Graceful, oh graceful, is yon peach-tree'—cleared out! (桃之夭夭, 走了). The last two characters being added to suggest a pun upon the *T'ao* character at the beginning, *q.d.* *T'ao-tsou-liao* (逃走了), escaped.

'It is only a Grieve-but not-in-excess affair' (不過是哀而不傷的事). This is another quotation from the Book of Odes, where the words *Ai-erh-pu-shang* (哀而不傷) signify moderation in the indulgence of emotion. The passage is used in the sense of 'No great matter' (挨着一點所傷不大), e.g., money which one is obliged to spend—it comes near (挨) to him, yet not so near as to do any harm.

'Done in Condensed-and-yet-elegant manner,—it will do' (簡而文的辦就是了). These words are from the Doctrine of the Mean, and are borrowed to signify an orderly and proper method of procedure (檢點的辦).

Lines from standard poetry are as easily made the basis of puns, as any other quotations. Thus the following from a poem of *Li Po* (李白). 'Looking west toward *Ch'ang An*,—home not in sight' (西望長安, 不見家). Used of anything the good qualities of which are not visible (不見佳).

In the sacred books of the Buddhists (佛經) the characters *Shé-li* (闍黎) signify the Buddhist priesthood. The character *Shé*, however, has also the sound *t'u*, and when these two characters



were seen in the new Buddhist combination, they suggested to irreverent outsiders two other characters of similar sound, to wit, *t'u-lü* (秃驢) or 'Bald Donkey,' in allusion to the shaven heads of the priests. Hence it is not uncommon to find Buddhist priests referred to as 'donkeys.'

The lictors in a Chinese *yamên*, are often nicknamed 'Dog's-legs' (狗腿子), from their incessant running about, as well as in covert allusion to their semi-canine instincts. These nicknames will make plain the meaning of the following couplet, 'When the lictors chase a chicken, the Dog's-legs are not so nimble as the chicken's legs; When the Buddhist priest rides a horse, the donkey's head is higher than the horse's head.'

皂隸趕雞。狗腿不如雞腿快。  
和尚騎馬。驢頭倒比馬頭高。

Entire sentences are frequently treated as substantives, and sometimes thus woven into proverbs, *e.g.*, 'The whole face beaming with the wish: May the heavenly magistrate bestow prosperity; the whole heart filled with the prayer: May his sons be thieves and his daughters prostitutes' (滿臉的天官賜福, 一肚子男盜女娼). The last words contain a common imprecation upon enemies, appended for instance to notices forbidding them to be removed, or to posters warning against infringement of a trade mark, etc., the expression signifying: 'If any one disregard this caution,—may his sons be thieves, and his daughters prostitutes!'

#### DOUBLE PUNS.

The Chinese consider the Frog and the Cicada as belonging to the same family. Hence, 'A Frog from the province of Kiangnan,—a Southern Cicada' (江南的蛤蟆, 南蟬). Used of one with whom it is hard to have any association (難纏).

'A dog gnawing a bone,—froth swallowed dry' (狗齧骨頭, 乾咽沫). The bone is bare, and nothing is to be got from it but the froth of the dog's mouth. Used of a roller (磨石) set in motion with nothing under it to be ground (研磨).

'Paste brushed on in mid-heaven,—pasting the clouds' (半懸空中刷鏡子, 糊雲). Met. of silly talk (胡云). 'The paperer going to heaven to paste the clouds' (裱糊匠上天糊雲) is a variation, with the same meaning.



'An old villager never having seen a thimble,—it strikes the needle' (庄家人沒見過頂針, 針擱的). Met. truly, sure enough (真個的).

'Sitting upon a salt stack, and beating the wooden fish [the hollow block upon which priests strike to secure attention to their demands for a subscription]—briny begging' (坐鹽馬敲木魚, 鹹化). Met. idle-talk (閒話).

'The old villager having never seen the seeds of a water-lily,—lotus kernels' (莊家老兒未見過蓮蓬子兒, 藕仁), *i.e.*, exasperating to others (惱人).

'A great handful of millet,—feeding chickens' (一大把抓秫秫, 餵雞). Met. every one for himself (爲己).

'The oil-dealer having no pen,—marks with chalk' (賣油的不帶筆, 石畫). Met. true words (實話).

'Come seek for wealth, and look for joy' (求財望喜). This is probably a jest local to Tientsin. Fortune tellers are in the habit of calling out in the words quoted, to attract custom. A street call (吆喝) preserves very little of the tones of characters, and the last two words as pronounced generally sounded like the phrase 'go west' (往西). The expression 'Seek wealth,—go westward' (求財往西) is used in banter to denote that there is no prospect of one's accumulating anything while he lives, so that he may as well postpone the gratification of any such ambition until he reaches the Western country to which the spirits of the dead are supposed to revert.

'Shelves nailed behind the cooking-boiler,—a cupboard' (鍋台後頭釘板子, 碗架), *i.e.*, a woman's second marriage (晚嫁).

'Sleepless half the night,—the sign of a depraved heart' (半夜睡不着, 心邪), *i.e.*, new shoes (新鞋).

'The pawn-shop east of the river [at Tientsin] Fountains of Abundance' (河東的當舖源裕)—*Yüan Yü*, the last two characters, being the sign of the pawnshop. These two words are 'borrowed' to suggest *yen yü* (言語) words, a phrase colloquially pronounced *yüan-yü*. The meaning is, if you want anything, *speak out*.

'When dawn appears in the east, to sneeze,—perceiving the light, and making a noise to be heard' (東方亮打涕噴, 聞明打聽). Used of one who 'asks for a name, and makes inquiries' (問名打聽).

'Though husband and wife quarrel and fight, it is not in real hatred, for the quarrel will all be made up by the next day' (夫妻兩口子吵鬧, 假惱, 兩口子吵鬧, 隔夜就好). Met. of a wadded garment (夾襖).

'The juggler spreads his rug, and covers the ground' (變戲法的鋪毯子, 蒙地). Of sworn brothers (盟弟).

'Entering a lime yard with fists doubled,—to pound the coal' (攪着拳頭進灰店, 搗煤). The characters *tao-mei* (搗煤) 'pounding coal,' are intended to suggest two others of the same sound (倒眉) signifying literally 'eyebrows inverted,' meaning one whose luck has departed, in which sense the proverb quoted is used. 'A real man,' runs the proverb 'would rather die than to have his eyebrows inverted'—that is to have his luck turn, and the fates against him (爲人寧死, 別倒眉).

So also the following saying, 'When going to an eating-house, go to one which is full of customers [because there everything is fresh, and you can always get what you want]; when about to take a bath, go to a bath-house that has lost its custom' [literally, with 'inverted eyebrows' because there alone will you find clean water] (下館下熱鬧館, 洗澡洗倒眉塘).

The next is a specimen of the curious habit of the Chinese mind of seizing upon a resemblance in sound, as in an ordinary pun, and then reinforcing the expression by another allusion suggested by the pun, but having not the remotest connection with the point of departure. Witness the following: 'He is one who is not in debt to a *peach kernel*, but he is indebted to every *apricot kernel*' (他是桃仁不該, 杏仁也該). Here the words *hsing-jen* (杏仁) 'apricot kernel' are used to suggest *hsing-jen* (姓人) a man with a surname, *everybody*; that is to say, He owes every one indiscriminately. The words 'peach kernel,' are suggested by 'apricot kernel,' and serve no other purpose than to throw dust in the eyes of those who are not in the habit of turning such short corners.

The silver ingots in which the Imperial taxes are paid, are commonly forwarded to the capital in logs of hard wood, which have been excavated so as to hold each about eighteen ingots or 'shoes' of sycee. The logs are then carefully secured with iron straps, and dragged in carts to Peking, often traversing many thousand miles before reaching their destination. The adoption of



this apparently clumsy method, in a country where banking is so perfectly understood as in China, shows in a striking manner the vicious character of the entire exchange system of the Empire, where there are no standard weights nor measures, and where the individual who deals with a native bank is inevitably the loser.

These singular coffers of the government—which make all speculation *en route* almost or quite impossible—are called *kang hsiang* or 'pole chests.' Now among the popular Festivals, to which allusion has been already made, is one called a *Kang Hsiang Hui* (杠箱會). It is a kind of sportive representation of the imperial money in transit, and abounds in curious exhibitions. Such Festivals—from the competition to display ingenious methods of amusing the public,—are termed *Sai Hui* (賽會) or Competing Festivals.

In the *Kang Hsiang Hui* there are representations of the imperial money carts, with a solemn official holding down the load (by the mere weight of his character), processions, innumerable officers, lanterns, etc. Upon the lanterns are characters denoting the rank of the officials in charge, which turn out, however, to be that of Police Justice (捕廳) instead of the magnates which would have been expected. Hence the Tientsin proverb, 'The lanterns of the officials at the *Kang Hsiang* Festival,—all police officers' (杠箱會的燈籠全捕廳). The last two characters are 'borrowed' to indicate that however much or long I am petitioned I will 'not listen to anything' (全不聽).

The long explanation requisite to make so brief a saying in the least intelligible furnishes an illustration of the inherent difficulty often experienced in understanding what is seen and heard in China. To the Chinese, these absolute incomprehensibilities are matters of course. "Do you know my Father?" said one Small Boy to another. "No," was the reply. "Humph!" rejoined the first: "*I know him just as easy!*"

Another variety of proverbs akin to puns, and sometimes containing puns, embodies a well known phrase in common use, accompanied by a sentence describing circumstances or conditions which in some way illustrate or apply the quoted phrase, not infrequently with an infusion of the unexpected and the incongruous, which are principal ingredients of humor. Some examples of what Mr. Scarborough terms *Inuendoes*, belong to this class of *Exegetical*



Proverbs, the nature of which will appear from the following examples. Like puns they are frequently quoted with the omission of the words in which lies the point of the saying, which are supposed to be suggested by the clew given in the remainder of the sentence.

沒有的事, 'There is no such thing;' 'it is not so'; 'a mistake.' Anything so rare as to have no duplicate, is colloquially called *mei yu ti tung hsi*, 沒有的東西.

'A man kicked to death by a duck,—there never was such a thing'\* (鴨子踢死人, 沒有的事).

牽着不走打着倒退, 'If led, he will not go, if beaten he pulls back,' 'A donkey crossing a bridge; if you lead him he will not go,—if you beat him he pulls back.' 驢子過橋, 牽着不走, 打着倒退.

雲裏來霧裏去, 'Coming in the clouds, and departing in the mist,' i.e., vague; uncertain; untrustworthy. 'Easy come, easy go.' 'Like the shoes of *Chang T'ien Shih*,—coming in the clouds, and disappearing in the mist' (張天師的鞋, 雲裏來霧裏去). *Chang T'ien Shih*, or the Preceptor of Heaven, is the title of the hereditary chief of the Taoist sect in China.

The legends and traditions connected with this individual, are traced back to *Chang Tao Ling*, 張道陵, who lived in the first century of the Christian era. (See Mayer's Manual, No. 35.) His home was in the Dragon and Tiger Mountain (龍虎山) in the province of Kiangsi, where his representative lives to this day, called by some the "Taoist Pope." He is officially connected with the government at Peking—as chief Exorcist for the Empire,—and a person who represents him, called 法官, is constantly at Peking. Whenever the Emperor wishes to consult the Preceptor of Heaven, on any business, he sends word to this representative, who writes on a slip of paper a mysterious message. This paper is burned, and *Chang T'ien Shih* goes at once to Peking. It is popularly supposed that he travels to the capital like other grandees, but returns by

\* The quickness of reply often observed even in uneducated Chinese, was illustrated by a boatman's answer to this proverb. He had complained that the price offered was too small, and that he should lose money. 'A Man kicked to death by a Duck,' was the reply. The boatman had evidently never heard the expression, but a bystander supplied the clew by inquiring: 'Was there ever such a thing?' 'Yes,' said the boatman, 'when the Duck was large, and the Man small' (鴨子大人小), with a possible hint that in this case the other individual concerned was a 'small' (mean) man (小人).

the clouds and mist, as in the proverb just quoted, hence the saying *Chang Tien Shih* going to Peking,—he is seen to go, but never to come back (張天師進京, 見去不見回來).

Hence the saying: 'When *Chun T'ien Shih* is bewitched by the devils, though he has resources, it is the same as if he had none (張天師叫鬼迷着了, 有法沒法兒了), said of one whose prestige disappears in presence of the greater prestige of another more powerful than himself.

貌不驚人, 'A countenance which does not inspire with awe.

'*Wu Ta Lang* carrying rush baskets,—a man who has no weight, and whose face does not inspire awe' (武大郎帶蒲包, 人不壓衆, 貌不驚人.)

兩手抱蜃蜃, 'Holding a hedgehog with both hands.' 'Holding a hedgehog with both hands,—a pity to throw him away, but if one does not throw him away, he pricks the hands' (兩手抱蜃蜃, 丟了可惜, 不丟扎手). In some parts of China hedgehogs are caught and plastered with mud until the quills are buried, when the animal is roasted, after which the skin and baked mud are readily removed. The flesh is said to be esteemed a delicacy.

隨方就圓. 'Following the square and complying with the round,' i.e., adaptation to circumstances.

'An eight-fairy (four-sided) table covering the mouth of a well,—adapting the round to the square' (八仙桌子蓋井口, 隨的方, 就的圓.)

進退兩難, 'Advance and retreat equally difficult.' 'A sheep plunging through a thicket,—advance and retreat alike difficult' (羊撞籬笆, 進退兩難.)

真假難分, 'The true and the false hard to discriminate.' '*Wu Tzu Hsü* breaking through the barriers,—hard to tell the true from the false' (伍子胥闖關真假難分). Allusion has already been made to *Wu Tzu Hsü*. (See Mayer's Manual, No. 879.) His father was Minister of the State of *Ch'u* (楚). The story is that when the King of *Ch'u* insisted upon taking the wife of his own son into his harem, *Wu She* (吳奢) the father of *Wu Tzu Hsü*, who was a brave, upright, and loyal officer, presented a formal remonstrance. In consequence of this good advice he was put to death with his family. Through a friendly warning delivered by stealth, *Wu Tzu Hsü* was made aware of his danger, and endeavored to escape to the State of *Wu* (吳), in order to raise an



army, and attack the king of *Ch'u*. As *Wu Tzu Hsü* was a formidable opponent, the King took every precaution against his escape, sending everywhere likenesses (畫影圖影) of him that identification might be easy. This made it almost impossible to leave *Ch'u*, but at length a friend of his father's who had put him in a safe hiding place, found another man so exactly like *Wu Tsz Hsü* in appearance as to render discrimination very difficult. By exchanging clothes with this person, *Wu Tsz Hsü* succeeded in breaking through the barriers, as it was impossible to distinguish which was which (真假難分). This rash act has given rise to the saying, *Wu Tzu Hsü* passing the boundary barrier,—bursting through (伍子胥過招關, 硬闖).

如膠似漆, 'Like glue and resembling lacker,' i.e., very intimate union.

'The mutual harmony of the fish and the water,—like glue and resembling lacker' (魚水相合, 如膠似漆).

七手八腳. 'Seven hands and eight feet,'—clumsy.

'A sea-crab crossing a river,—seven hands and eight feet' (海螃蟹過河, 七手八腳).

門當戶對. 'The door suitable, the window corresponding,'—matched.

'The water carrier seeking a marriage alliance with the man who sells fuel,—well matched families.' 挑水的說給賣柴火的, 門當戶對.

一根不拔. 'Not pulling out a single hair (or feather),'—stingy.

'An earthenware cock,—not a single feather can be pulled out' (磁公雞, 一根不拔).

手到擒來. 'Taken with a single effort,'—accomplished instantly.

'Feeling after a louse in the seat of a pair of trousers,—seized as soon as reached' (褲襠的摸虱子, 手到擒來).

費力不討好. 'Expending strength and yet not attaining excellence.'

'The girdles of *Chien Ch'iao*,—hard to make, and not good when they are made' (建橋的帶子, 費力不討好, *Chien Ch'iao* is a market-town (鎮店) near *Ching Chou* 景州 in *Chihli*, where the girdles answer the above description.

顧前不顧後, 'Looking in front, but disregarding the rear,'—reckless.



'A Tiger entering a cave, looking in front, but disregarding the rear'\* (老虎入山洞, 顧前不顧後).

遠水解不了近渴, 'Distant water cannot quench present thirst.'

'The water of Yü Ch'üan Mountain is sweet,—but distant water cannot quench present thirst' (玉泉山的水甜, 遠水解不了近渴). The 'Jade Springs' (玉泉) west of Peking are those from which water is supplied to the Imperial Palace.

家菜不香, 外菜香. 'Vegetables of one's own raising are not relished,—those from other's gardens are the best.'

'Other peoples wives are best, one's own children are the best; vegetables in one's own garden are not relished, those from other gardens are the best' (妻子是人家的好, 孩子是自家的好, 家菜不香, 外菜香).

一物降一物, 'One thing reduces another'; every substance has its natural enemy, which can overcome it.

'One thing reduces another,—brine reduces bean-curd' (一物降一物, 滷水降豆腐). *Lu shui* (滷水) is made from impure salt (小鹽) and is impregnated with soda. Bean-curd cannot be made without it.

人馬鎗刀, 'Man, horse, spear, and sword'; i.e., an *in-competent* man, a *lame* horse, a *broken* spear, and a *dull* sword, in other words an inadequate equipment.

'Riding on a fat pig, and brandishing a carrying-pole,—what a soldier you are, what a horse you have, what a spear, and what a sword!' (騎着肥豬掄扁担, 看你這個人馬鎗刀).

裏鉤外連, 'Hooked inside, connected outside'; collusion, conspiracy, treason.

'A badly bound foot,—a hook inside, a lily outside' (骨釘脚裏鉤外連). A woman's foot if not reduced to the proper shape, is considered very ugly, and is shaped like a nail (釘), or hook (鉤), whereas it pretends to be a 'lily flower' (蓮花), an expression which is used to suggest the phrase signifying collusion (裏鉤外連).

不看吃的看穿的, 'disregarding what is eaten, regarding only what is worn.'

\* The Tiger has a short neck (or no neck at all, as the Chinese say), and cannot be always looking over his shoulder: although rash, he is powerful. The idea of foolish presumption, like our saying about the Ostrich, is embodied by the Chinese in the proverb, 'Like the wild pheasant,—taking care of its head, but not of its tail' (屬野雞的, 顧頭不顧尾).

'Putting on a cloak made of grass to keep off the rain, and gnawing a stone; disregarding what is eaten, caring only for what is worn'\* (披着蓑衣, 齧石頭, 不看吃的, 看穿的).

頭上一句脚上一句. 'Disjointed talk'; literally, 'one sentence on the head, and another on the feet.'

'Carrying straw hats on his back, crying straw shoes,—one sentence for the head, and one sentence for the feet' (背着草帽, 吆喝草鞋, 頭上一句脚上一句).

邪不侵正 'The false cannot overpower the true.'

'The sacred books repress evil spirits,—the false cannot overcome the true' (聖經鎮鬼祟, 邪不侵正).

火燎眉毛, 'The fire burning the hair on one's eyebrows'; in imminent danger.

'Burning paper money against the wind,—the fire burns the hair on one's eyebrows' (迎着風化紙錢, 火燎眉毛).

靠火先熱, 'Those nearest the fire are soonest warmed.'

'The wife's relatives sitting at the head of the *k'ang*; the husband's relatives going by the door,—in short nearest the fire soonest warmed' (娘家的親, 炕頭上坐, 婆家的親, 門前過, 總而言之, 靠火先熱).

有一句說一句, 'Everything outspoken; no concealment.'

'The kitchen-god returning to heaven,—everything told' (灶王爺上天, 有一句說一句).

少所見, 多所怪, 'The less one has seen, the more surprised he is at what he sees.'

'To see a camel and mistake it for a horse with a double back,—limited observation and much astonishment' (見駱駝說馬重背, 少所見, 多所怪).

皂白不分, 'Not to know black from white'; extreme stupidity.

'The charcoal seller falling into the flour jar,—no distinction between black and white' (賣炭的掉在麪缸裏, 皂白不分).

比上不足比下有餘, 'Inferior to those above, superior to those below.'

\* A similar idea is embodied in a proverb referring to a bird called the *T'ai-p'ing Niao* (太平鳥) which has beautiful plumage, but which like the Ostrich, eats whatever is most easily to be had. 'Like the *T'ai-p'ing* bird,—particular as to costume, but not as to food' (屬太平鳥的, 講穿不講吃). Both sayings are used of the poor, who try to dress and appear like the rich.



'You on a fine horse, and I upon a donkey: looking back I see a man wheeling a barrow; I am not so high as the one who is higher, but higher than the one who is not so high' 你騎駿馬, 我騎驢, 回頭又見推車漢, 比上不足比下有餘.\*

一代不如一代, 'Each generation is worse than the last.'

'The Woodpecker transmigrated into an Owl,—each generation worse than the last' (鑄打木轉夜貓子, 一代不如一代). The Woodpecker is not supposed to have any distinctive character, but that of the Owl is hopelessly bad. He is the bird of ill omen. He never enters a house unless some calamity impends (夜貓子進宅, 無事不來). When the Woodpecker, therefore, according to the Buddhist theory of transmigration (轉生) reappears in the form of the Owl, this is a case in which the present generation has deteriorated, as compared with the last.

閒置忙用. 'Provide when at leisure, to use when in haste.'

'A girl of thirteen or fourteen, making baby napkins,—prepare in leisure, to use in haste' (十三四歲的姑娘裁襦子, 閒置忙用).

手忙腳亂, 'The hands hurried, and the feet in confusion', i.e., distractedly busy.

'Working a bolting mill [done by a treadle with the feet] and at the same time beating cymbals,—the hands hurried, and the feet in confusion' (打麵羅的敲梆子, 手忙腳亂).

左右爲難, 'Trouble right and trouble left'; embarrassing alternatives.

'The Door-gods wrongly pasted,—trouble to the right and to the left' (反貼門神, 左右爲難). Reference has been already made to the gods who are supposed to guard the doors. (See Mayer's Manual, No. 945.) Pictures of these two heroes are pasted on the two leaves of Chinese doors, so that when the doors are closed, the figures face each other. The supposition here is that each one is pasted on the wrong half of the door, so that their faces are always averted, making trouble on either hand.

The three following examples are adaptations of phrases from Mencius.

出類拔萃, 'Above all in his class, chosen out as the most excellent.'

\* This is more commonly given, 比上不足比下有餘, 人家騎馬我騎驢.

'Among birds the Phoenix, among fish the Dragon, chiefest of the class' (鳥中之鳳, 魚中之龍, 出類拔萃). Said of the Emperor, etc.

The following involve puns:—

賢者在位, 'The virtuous man on a throne.'

'Pickled turnips placed on a chair,—the *salted ones* on the seat' (醃蘿蔔放在椅子上, 鹹者在位).

能者在職, 'Able men in power.'

'The conjurers on the twigs of a tree,—the man of ability on a branch' (變戲法在樹梢上, 能者在枝).

By omitting the final phrase and adding the words, 'The answer is a clause from Mencius' (打孟子一句), the two preceding examples become riddles.

(一言難盡), 'A matter hard to treat exhaustively in one word.' 'A flat stone [used for washing clothes by pounding on it, and hence worn hard and smooth] lying in a jar of pickles, not a grain of salt can enter' (搥板石落在鹹菜缸裏, 一盞難進.) Used of a comprehensive subject (一言難盡).

#### THE SUPPRESSION OF FINAL CHARACTERS.

Reference has already been made repeatedly to the fact that the Chinese are in the habit of intentionally suppressing a part of a sentence, leaving it to be suggested by that which is expressed. Much of the relish with which they employ some of the sayings involving a double meaning, depends upon their fondness for this interplay of repression and expression. Aside from those which have been previously instanced, there is, however, a large class of phrases vaguely termed *Hsieh hou yü* (歇後語 *q.d.* phrases in which the final word is quiescent, or 解後語 *q.d.* explaining \* the concluding character by others) which are so widely current, and at the same time in themselves so perfectly unintelligible, as to deserve in this connection some notice.

If a person who speaks English were to hear himself addressed in the words 'come to your frugal,' he would probably find no difficulty in comprehending that he was called to a *meal*, that word being suppressed, and substituted by an adjective which thus becomes a substantive. When a man who is unloading a quantity of

This class of expressions resembles riddles, and unlike proverbs in general, are not 'current' in the sense of being ordinarily comprehensible. They are simply linguistic curiosities, of no practical value whatever.



packages, observes of one of them that it is "what the shoemaker threw at his wife," he is understood to intimate that this is the last, which constitutes a *Hsieh hou yü*, differing in no respect from those to be met with in Chinese, but while it might not be easy to recall a dozen similar phrases which should be generally current in English, it would be possible to collect them in Chinese by the hundred. One reason for this circumstance is no doubt to be sought in the strong *penchant* (already frequently remarked) which all classes of Chinese display for this and similar modes of speech. Another cause is, perhaps, found in the different structure of the two languages. In English the distinction between an adjective and a noun is clear and well marked. If, for example, we were to suppose the expression first cited above to come into common use, the ultimate effect would be to add another and special significance to the word *frugal*, to wit, that of a meal, in which sense it would be daily uttered without the slightest thought of any word which it qualified. While this would be the theoretical result, there is reason to suppose that, in certain cases, it has actually taken place. For instance the word 'constitutional' signifies, among other meanings, that which is beneficial to the constitution, as exercise. In the form in which the word came into use, by the students of the University of Cambridge, it is highly probable that it was originally intended for a *hsieh hou yü*—'come take your constitutional [walk],'—but the readiness of adjectives to take on substantive meanings, soon spoiled the allusion, and generated another noun, so that "constitutional" in the sense of 'walk,' has now attained to a well recognized place in English dictionaries. When a language betrays a tendency to turn harmless little pleasantries of this sort into solemn linguistic earnest, the effect must be to discourage the pleasantries.

There is moreover a third cause, more powerful than the preceding two combined, tending to prevent the formation in English of *hsieh hou yü* on anything like the Chinese scale; namely, that there is little or nothing to make them of. The English language is fluid. There is almost no fixed way of saying anything. One mode of expression is as good as another, and whichever most quickly and surely conveys the idea, is for that reason the best. The Chinese language—once fluid—has ages ago set, like plaster-of-Paris, in a mould. It abounds in myriads upon myriads of 'ready

made' phrases of all possible qualities, and of miscellaneous lengths, relating to every subject. Speech in Chinese, and especially composition in Chinese, in some respects resembles setting up the forms of a book from type which is cast, not only in single words, but also into phrases and sentences. Upon these terms if one is to print at all he must employ such type as he finds, and the type which he finds comes in blocks. Thus if one wishes to speak in Chinese of the elegant accomplishments in the following terms, he must say Music, Chess, Books, Drawing (琴棋書畫) and no other arrangement will answer. So generally. Besides all this, the books from which countless numbers of such expressions have come down to the present day, are the only national 'text book series,' and they must be committed to memory, and held there forever. They do not vary in form at different times and in different epochs, or in different places. None of all these circumstances is true of Western languages. Our Bibles afford, perhaps, the nearest approach to unbroken uniformity which could be named, and our Bibles exist in many different versions, and are not safe against radical revision. (Imagine a Committee of fifty or sixty revisers, presenting a new text of the Chinese Classics!) In short, there is little or nothing in the English language which is universally familiar and at the same time invariable in form, unless the multiplication table be an exception, which, it is superfluous to remark, affords very little scope for *hsieh hou yü*. Contrast this poverty of materials with the wealth of the Chinese. Every Chinese lad is supposed to memorize the Hundred Surnames, the Trimetrical Classic, and frequently the Thousand Character Classics, which are followed up by the Four Books, and other Classics. All these, in addition to the vast numbers of ready made phrases not directly traceable to books, form a mass of material available for *hsieh hou yü* absolutely unrivalled.

We shall now proceed to cite some examples of this class of expressions. The characters horizontally arranged are simply introductory words, which may at pleasure be indefinitely varied; the characters in a perpendicular line beneath are the *text*, and the final character in brackets at the bottom, is the one which is suppressed, and which all the rest are intended to suggest. All that is necessary for a successful *hsieh hou yü* is that the characters of which it is composed should have a well known, invariable



order. This being presupposed, mere arbitrary sounds in which the characters have no meaning at all, are quite as good as any others. Thus the sounds, *ch'ih pu leng teng* (吃不楞登) represent the noise of beating on a drum, or anything similar, like our 'rub-a-dub-dub.' Hence the *hsieh hou yü*: 'Light the Ch'ih-pu-leng,' i.e., *teng*, *Lamp*.

點上了  
吃不  
楞  
[燈]

In the same way the sounds *p'i ta p'u teng* (劈打撲登) represent the splash of a person in the water, and may be used like the last.

點上了  
劈打  
撲  
[燈]

There is a theatrical play which represents a lame priest riding on a blind man's back to see the illumination at the Feast of Lanterns, called the *Hsia tzü kuang teng* (瞎子逛燈). Hence the expression: 'Light the Blind-man-strolling-to-see'—*Lamps*.\*

點上了  
瞎子  
逛  
[燈]

Names of places are as readily incorporated in *hsieh hou yü* as any other words. Thus because *hams*, fire legs, (火腿) come from *Chin Hua* (金華) we have the expression: Lifting a *Chin Hua* fire—*leg*.

抬起了  
金華  
火  
[腿]

Names of persons are also often incorporated in *hsieh hou yü*. Thus the expression 'Mai Ch'en divorcing his wife' (賣臣休妻) refers to *Chu Mai Ch'en* (朱賣臣) already mentioned, whose wife having left him, he refused to receive her back. 'Marrying a Mai Ch'en divorcing'—a wife.

娶一房  
賣臣  
休  
[妻]

*Fei Chung* (費仲) and *Yu Hun* (尤渾) were two ideally vicious ministers of the wicked tyrant *Chou* (紂) whose crimes extinguished the *Shang* Dynasty. 'His heart is *Fei Chung Yu*'—*turbid*.

他心中  
費仲  
尤  
[渾]

\* The method adopted by these individuals is the subject of a proverb, 'The blind man carrying on his back the lame man to see the lamps—you borrow my legs and I borrow your eyes' (瞎子背着瘸子去逛燈,你借我的腿,我借你的眼).

*Shih Ch'ien* (時千) was one of the robbers on the *Liang Shan* (梁山) under *Sung Chiang* (宋江) already mentioned. The department of *Shih Ch'ien* was the plunder of hen-roosts. 'Buying a *Shih Ch'ien* stealing'—a chicken.

買一隻  
時  
千  
偷  
雞  
[雞]

*Hsieh hou yü* frequently embody a pun. Thus, *Wang Ch'ao* (王朝) and *Ma Han* (馬漢) were two officials of the Sung Dynasty. 'One's whole body covered with *Wang Ch'ao Ma*'—*perspiration*, where *han* (漢) is intended to suggest *han* (汗).

出一身  
王  
朝  
馬  
漢  
[漢]

A T'ang Dynasty general named *Yang Fan* (楊凡) was so unprepossessing as to earn the nickname 'Ugly Devil' (醜鬼). 'This affair has about it a little Ugly Devil *Yang*'—*vexation*, where *fan* (凡 suggests *fan* (煩).

這件事有點  
醜  
鬼  
楊  
煩  
[凡]

By far the greater number of *hsieh hou yü*, are made of common phrases which have an established and well recognized order. According to the Chinese theory the earth is divided into six-tenths water, three-tenths mountains, and one-tenth arable land (三山六水一分田). Hence 'Drinking a cup of Three-mountains six'—*water*.

喝一碗  
三  
山  
六  
水  
[水]

'This affair is without Combing-the-head-and-washing-the'—*face*, i.e., not respectable.

此事無  
梳  
頭  
洗  
臉  
[臉]

The *Hsiao niao*, a species of owl, is the Chinese model of unfilial ingratitude, for it is believed to devour its own mother leaving only the head, which it hangs on a tree. It is for this reason that the heads of criminals exposed as a deterrent from crime, are called: 'Owls heads to warn the public' (梟首示衆). An animal called the *ching* (獍) is credited with eating its parents in the same way, as in the saying, 'The Owl-cat eats its father, and the owl devours its mother' (獍獸食父, 梟鳥食母). Hence 'This is my own Owl-eats-its'—*mother*.

生身的  
梟  
鳥  
食  
母  
[母]



'You have Longing-for-wealth-destroys,' *i.e.*, *happiness*, 你是有望財折福

The phrase 'seven separated and five dispersed' (七離五散) signifies complete disintegration. The last character is also used in the sense of 'dismissed,' as a servant. The danger of comprehending this *hsieh hou yü* is much diminished by the insertion of the superfluous euphonic character *tzu* (子). 'He has been seven-separated-five,'—dispersed, *i.e.*, turned out of his place (散了). 他是七離子五散

\* The words *Chi lin kuang tang* (磯琉逛鐺) are employed to denote a rattling, clattering sound. This colloquial expression is embodied in a *hsieh hou yü* thus, 'I went on his rattling clatter.' Here the *tang* character is intended to suggest the *tang* (當) occurring in the phrase *shang tang* (上當) to be taken in or imposed upon,—'I have been deceived by him.' 我上他的磯琉逛鐺

In ancient times the Board of Civil Office was called the Heavenly Magistracy, a term which is still in use (吏部天官). Hence the frequent reference by the Chinese to the 'Heavenly Magistrate,' who is constantly entreated, by an inscription over doorways, to 'bestow felicity' (天官賜福). 'This door must be Civil Office Heavenly,' *i.e.*, *shut*, where *kwan* (官) suggests *kwan* (關). 此門要吏部天官

'Wearing on one's feet Doctrine-upright men'—脚上穿道正人

*depraved*, where *hsieh* (邪) suggests *hsieh* (鞋), *shoes*. [邪]

'Seated in a Side-sect-depraved'—*instruction*, where 坐一乘傍門邪教

*chiao* (教) represents *chiao* (轎) a *sedan chair*. [教]

\* 逛鐺 as an onomatopoe is heard in such expressions as, 聽那車逛鐺逛鐺過去, 'hear that cart go rattling by.'

Classical sentences are of course among the most convenient materials for *hsieh hou yü*. Thus in the Book of Odes are to be found the words '*chün tzu hao ch'iu*' (君子好逑) meaning 'The Prince desires an alliance.' In the following sentence this quotation sounds to the ear as if it meant, 'The superior man it is easy to entreat 君子好求.'

'Do not go and Prince-desire-an'—alliance, *i.e.*, entreat, 不必去 in other words 'do not beg for it.'

君  
子  
好  
逑  
[逑]

'To-day there will be When clouds-mount-there- 今天雲下 comes, *i.e.*, rain.

雲  
騰  
致  
雨  
[雨]

'Your things are Autumn-gathered-winter,'— 你的東西 hidden.

秋  
收  
冬  
藏  
[藏]

'The affair will come to Heavens-and-Earth-somber- 光景要 and'—yellow, where *huang* (黃) represents *huang* (荒), 天 emptiness or frustration.

地  
玄  
黃  
[黃]

The three preceding examples, all taken from the very first page of the Millenary Classic, might easily be supplemented by a list sufficiently formidable to exhaust the patience of the most devoted Reader. For there is scarcely one of the two hundred and fifty four-character sentences to be found in this book which has not been, or easily might be, thrust into a *hsieh hou yü*. Not only so, but several of them may be braided together, as in the following example. The indulgent Reader, who may have (temporarily) forgotten a part of his Millenary Classic, may be reminded that among the earlier sentences of that singular *olla podrida* are the three following:



閑談彼短, 'Do not discuss another's *short* comings.'

靡恃己長, 'Do not trust to your own merits' (*long* places).

果珍李奈, 'Among delicate fruits are prune-plums, and bullace-plums.'

These three sentences, with the omission of the final characters, are used as tips to the following lines, in the last of which *nai* 奈 is employed to represent *nai* 奶 *breast*.

王四相公閑談彼。

王四娘子靡恃己。

一朝堂前兩相遇。

一頭碰着果珍李。

'Young Mr. Wang was I-must-not-talk-of-thy.'

'Young Mrs. Wang was I-must-not-trust-to-my.'

'Mrs. Wang was in the room, when Mr. Wang he comes.'

'His head collides with Mrs. Wang's Delicious-fruits-are-plums.'

The expression *yeh* (or *chui*) *k'u-lang* 拽苦郎 signifies one who 'drags out bitterness,' with the implication that besides being wretched he is in some way at fault. This not self-luminous phrase, is involved in the following sentence 你是拽苦, 背着一個狗, *i.e.*, 'You are a *Yeh-k'u* carrying a Dog on its back.' Here the words *Yeh-k'u* are used to denote *Yeh-k'u-lang* 拽苦郎 as above, and this in turn is intended to suggest quite another kind of *Yeh-k'u-lang*, 拽苦狼, to wit, a 'Wolf which drags bitterness,'—that is, you are a 'Wolf which drags bitterness, having in addition a *dog on its back*!' In other words: 'You are a miserable oppressed wretch!'

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Miscellaneous Proverbs.*

The remaining class of Chinese Proverbs is not a class at all, but rather an entire absence of classification, and embraces everything which finds no other convenient notation elsewhere. The contents are therefore extremely varied. We have already seen that the subject of many proverbs is some simple object. Thus the Cat, Camel, Chicken, Dog, Donkey, Horse, and Ox, among domestic animals, suggest many hundred proverbial sayings of every variety.

Wild animals are often used, as in the Fables of Æsop, to set forth some special quality of which each is taken as a representative. The Fox (as in Æsop) frequently typifies cunning, the wolf base wickedness, the lion and the tiger strength combined with ferocity, while the Phoenix is the type of excellence.

Thus in the saying, 'The Phoenix is not so good at roosting as a chicken' (鳳凰落架不如鷄), we are taught nothing in the line of ornithology, but that common people have certain advantages over their superiors, as, for example, when both are compelled to support themselves by manual labor, a coolie is better off than a Governor General.

So also 'A Phoenix is not to be got from a hen's nest' (草雞窩裏拉不出鳳凰來), *i.e.*, no figs from thistles. But the same expression, with the negative omitted, denotes excellence in an unexpected place, 'A crane among chickens' (鶴立雞羣).

The Wu T'ung—"the national tree of China"—in like manner represents preëminent excellence: 'The family that has the Wu T'ung tree, will attract to it the Phoenix' (家有梧桐樹引進鳳凰來).

Our old acquaintances in fable, the Tortoise and the Hare, have been badly treated by the Chinese, and are connected, the latter not infrequently, and the former almost invariably, with the vilest associations.\*

\* In the Appendix to Stent's Vocabulary (3rd Edition, Note 95) an explanation is given of this use of the name of the tortoise, to which the supposed habits of the cuckoo, afford but a faint and distant analogy.



The facility with which instruction may be extracted from common things, appears in the frequency with which such objects as Melons, Cabbages, Peaches and Cucumbers (though seldom Grapes) serve as pegs upon which to hang a proverbial idea.

Of these sayings, the following—in which a great deal of instructive juice is squeezed out of the Turnip—may serve as specimens, 'A patch of turnips and a patch of other vegetables, each one raises what he likes best' (一畦蘿蔔一畦菜, 各人養的, 各人愛), *i.e.*, every one to his mind.

'A wife who holds up her head as she walks, and a husband who drops his head; a turnip with a black heart, and a single bulbed onion' (抬頭老婆, 低頭漢, 黑心蘿蔔獨頭蒜). These classes of persons are dangerous to provoke, resembling in their most unfavorable points the vegetables named.

'Can we not make food without your red turnip?' (少了你這個紅蘿蔔做不上齋來麼). This sarcastic inquiry is addressed to one who imagines that his services are indispensable.

The same idea is also expressed in the saying, 'When the butcher dies do you suppose we shall eat our pork with the bristles on?' (死屠戶, 還連毛兒吃豬肉麼). Do not imagine that the monopoly of anything is lodged in you, for there are many others who can take your place.

'Liking to eat turnips but not eating pears; each one has his own preferences' (愛吃蘿蔔不吃梨, 各有所好). Equivalent to the ancient dictum that there is no disputing concerning tastes. The following saying embodies the same idea: 'The provincial treasurer eating hemp-curd, each officer has his own peculiarities' (布政司吃麻豆腐, 各官各稟性).

'Hemp-curd' is a coarse kind of food eaten only by the very poor. The meaning is that individual tastes are not determined by accidents of social position.

The following is one of the few proverbs which refer to grapes

Grapes raised in the yard of an alms-house, a bunch both poor and sour' (養濟院栽葡萄, 是窮酸, 一獨潑). The term 'sour' is used of deep trouble.

'Each turnip has its hole' (一個蘿蔔, 一個坑兒), *i.e.*, no money should be applied to its proper use. 'The money intended for vinegar, should not be diverted to the purchase of pickle' (打醋的錢, 不買醬). Also, no turnip without its hole,—no idle persons.

'When the turnips are pulled, there is so much the more ground' (拔了蘿蔔, 地皮寬). When expenses are diminished, one is better off,—the departing guest leaves so much the more room in the house, etc.

'When the market is brisk the seller does not stop to wash the mud from his turnips' (蘿蔔快了, 不洗泥). When business presses, there is no time to be wasted over trifles.

'The toasted turnip—black in the middle' (火燒膛的蘿蔔, 黑了心了). Of one radically vicious.

The Chinese are inexpert in what we mean by Botany, as well as in Zoology, and in most other branches of physical science. They are, however, keen observers, and have taken note of almost everything which they have observed. Although perhaps the greater part of the explanations which they offer of natural phenomena—provided they offer any explanation at all—are totally astray, that which they profess to explain is generally worthy of attention.

It is not, however, in mere observation that the Chinese excel so much as in the faculty of detecting analogies—often in the most unlikely places. It is this aptness in analogy which imparts to numerous everyday expressions in Chinese their poetical flavor, instances of which will occur to every reader.

As an example of an ingenious parallelism, take the following: 'Water is most yielding, but when subjected to extreme cold it forms ice, and solidifies; Gold is most solid, but when subjected to extreme heat it melts, and liquefies, and is then yielding; from this is to be learned that the character of a man is not fully brought out until he has been pushed to the direst extremity' (水至柔, 寒極則冰而堅, 金至堅, 熱極則鎔爲汁而柔, 由此而知人不到不能爲的極處, 也不能化解其心).

Physical defects of every kind furnish suggestions for many proverbs, ranging from the merely literal to those which are mainly or exclusively metaphorical. Thus the Lame, the Deaf, the Pock-marked, and the Hare-lipped, are trussed up in many pithy sayings. The Dumb often serve as a type of repressed feeling, as in the phrase, 'To suffer loss like a dumb man' (吃啞叭虧), *i.e.*, making no ado over one's troubles. 'When the dumb man eats gentian, he tastes the bitterness inside' (啞叭吃黃連, 苦在心裏).

The Blind and the Bald are conspicuous proverbial figures, and it must be rare indeed that they hear any good of themselves.



The prejudice against persons with these defects is apparently almost as strong as was that of the famous Indian Chief, Spotted Tail, who said to an Indian agent: "Go tell the Great Father to send us no more bald men. I never saw a bald headed man who was not a liar." So with the Chinese, moral depravity might be personified in semi-Shaksperian phrase as a 'Bald bad man.'

'The Blind are hateful, the Bald are depraved; cripples can kill without a sword' (瞎狠秃刁, 癩子殺人不用刀).

'Of ten Bald men nine are deceitful, and the tenth is dumb' (十个秃子九个詐, 那个不詐是啞叭).

'The Bald are false, the Blind perverse, and one eyed people are even worse' (秃子詐, 瞎子乖, 一個眼的更發壞).

'Associate with Beggars, but not with the Blind' (能交花子, 不交瞎子).

'If a Lame man once seizes you, he will have your life' (癩子抓住要性命).

The latent assumption in all these cases appears to be that the physical and moral natures are conterminous. A person who has some bodily defect, has presumptively a corresponding moral defect, and the one is the advertisement of the other.

Hence the saying, 'If you do not call him bald, he will not call you blind' (你莫說他頭秃, 他別說你眼瞎).

'If the eyes squint the heart is not correct; if the nose is crooked the intentions are not upright' (眼斜心不正, 鼻歪意不端). Conversely, 'If the eyes do not look sidewise, the heart is sure to be upright' (目不旁視心必正).

The national tendency to banter those who have physical defects, is instanced in another proverb similar to these: 'When the crooked mouth blows a spiral horn, one distorted thing meets another' (歪嘴吹簫栗, 偏偏遇見偏偏的).

'An iron-wire lantern,—a face with shallow pock-marks' (鐵絲燈籠淺薄蕨子臉).

'An eagle nose, a falcon eye, high cheek-bones, a pock-marked face, no whiskers,—with such do not associate' (鷹鼻, 鵠眼, 顴骨高, 癩面, 無鬚, 不可交).

Oblique bantering descriptions of some of these physical defects, are extremely abundant, especially of the pock-marked, which is the more remarkable, as this class of persons is to be everywhere met in great numbers. The following saying is of this sort, intended to

describe the pits left by small-pox. 'Sand scattered by fire-crackers; a water-melon rind pecked by a chicken's bill; a red wasp's nest hung upside down; the pumice-stone of the bathing-house' (炮打砂土地, 鷄啄西瓜皮, 倒吊馬蜂窩, 塘子擦腳石).

Many parts of the body are made to do duty in some metaphoric-al aphorism, e.g., 'There is no elbow that bends outward' (胳膊肘兒沒有往外扭的), i.e., every man looks out first for Number One.

'The elbow cannot twist around the thigh' (胳膊掙不過大腿去). This means that a younger generation (晚輩的) cannot hope to circumvent an elder (長一輩的).

'Everything goes like pulling the elbow' (諸事掣肘), i.e., 'hard to accomplish.'

'A broken arm is hidden in the sleeve; tears flowing into one's stomach' (胳膊折了, 往袖子裏吞, 有了眼淚往肚子裏流). Used of one who quietly suffers less.

'To knock out a tooth, and swallow it' (打牙咽到肚裏). Same as the last.

'A nose with three nostrils expels too much air' (三個鼻子眼, 多出氣). Used of one who meddles with affairs which do not concern him.

'Three nostrils, and two of them shedding tears' (三行鼻子兩行淚). The mention of the extra nostril is to emphasize the idea of the 'bitterness' involved.

'Among the ten fingers there are long and short ones' (十個指頭有長短). This proverb is used to denote that however numerous the sons of the same parents they are all of different dispositions (一娘生九子, 九子各別).

'When the other fingers fall to scratching, the thumb follows along' (大拇指頭撓癢癢, 隨着). Just as the thumb is unable to be of any assistance in this operation, passively acquiescing, so in public affairs there are men who merely go with the crowd but who are of no use.

The Buddhist and Taoist sects, which represent to the Chinese nearly all which they are able to imagine in the line of religion, have many couplets and stanzas which embody some idea—or fragment of an idea—to be found somewhere in the system. Some of these sayings were originally composed, perhaps as mnemonics like the artificial Latin verses which the unhappy student commits to mind, to fix in the memory the various qualities, Major and Minor,



Affirmative and Negative, in the syllogism of formal Logic. Others more nearly resemble the fluid doggerel which frequently forms a convenient vehicle to induce children to swallow dry dates, and other forms of intellectual aliment, which would otherwise be far more difficult to administer as, *e.g.*, "Thirty days hath September, etc.," "In 1492, Columbus crossed the ocean blue," etc., etc. Of proverbial citations from the sacred books of these sects, the following from one of the Buddhist Classics (佛經) is an example: 'Not a single cash can be taken away; only one's sins follow the body' (一文將不去, 只有孽隨身)

In China books which have for their object the inculcation of 'Virtue' (善書) are extremely numerous, and form a kind of literature of their own, which is put into popular circulation by the same kind of benevolent machinery which in Western lands operate Bible and Tract Societies.\* The writers of these books thoroughly understand their business. The style is often plain and forcible, and the maxims are not infrequently enforced by a citation of 'cases' like those in our medical or law books giving details of some individual who violated the maxim, and incurred the due punishment. Quotations from the Classics, popular Odes, Antithetical Couplets, current Proverbs, and ingenious Fables, all do their part to drive home the lesson.

'The skillful writer,' says the adage, 'does not choose his pen' (善書的人不擇筆) and the saying would be equally true if understood to imply that the man who composes 'Virtue Books' (善書的人) can do it with any materials which happen to be convenient. Citations from books of this sort are so numerous that they might be gathered into a large class by themselves. Vice is condemned and Virtue commended in the most direct terms, as well as in the most apt figures of speech.

Of this quality of the 'Virtue Books' the two following citations may serve as contrasted examples: 'The main course for the admonition of men, consists in three particulars; to persuade them to give up wine, licentiousness, and gambling' (大道勸人三件事, 戒酒除花莫賭錢)

'The Brothel is a Pit for the Myriad; the Gambling house is a Playing Hall; a Wine Saloon is a Nest of wrong doing; an

\* For an interesting review of this kind of literature by Mr. Scarborough, see *Chinese Recorder* for 1882, Nos. 4 and 5.

Opium Den is a Lamp to light the Corpse' (煙場是萬人坑, 賭場是剝皮廳, 酒館裏是非窩, 烟館有照尸燈).

To those who know anything of the Chinese popular theology, it is superfluous to remark that the 'Virtue Books' are not in the least sectarian. Confucian morality, Buddhist and Taoist divinities and tenets are all equally assumed as true, and are all equally useful.

However the current saying may declare that 'Man dies as a lamp is extinguished' (人死如燈滅), the popular theology knows better, and it is extremely common to find people who have no belief in a future life, unquestioning believers in a future punishment! The Buddhist doctrine of Rewards and Punishments has taken a strong hold of the Chinese conscience, as numerous familiar sayings constantly quoted, pasted up in temples, or cast into inscriptions on temple bells, abundantly show.

A specimen or two will suffice to illustrate the whole class: 'Virtue and Vice are the outward acts, Misery and Happiness are the Recompense; the Recompense of Heaven is concealed, that of earth is manifest' (善惡施也, 禍福報也, 天報屬陰, 地報屬陽).

Good and evil are rewarded at last; though travelling far and flying high there is still no escape' (善惡到頭終有報, 遠走高飛也難逃).

So the Recorder in the temples of the city god (城隍廟) is represented with his writing implement and above him the inscription, 'My Pen is hard to escape' (我筆難逃). With their usual thoughtless thoughtfulness, the Chinese are perpetually citing the Buddhist sayings about reformation, or repentance.

'If one only turns his head there is the shore; why wait until you come *here* to repent of your sins?' (但得回頭便是岸, 何須到此悔前非), a Couplet found in the temples of the City god, or more briefly, 'A boundless, bitter Sea, turn your head and there is the shore' (苦海無邊, 回頭是岸).

In the same key, is the following: 'Though one's sins should fill the heavens, they cannot prevent Repentance' (人有彌天的罪過, 當不得悔改二字).

But this kind of 'repentance' can only come to fruit in periods of successive transmigrations, practically infinite. 'One slip of the foot involves a thousand ages of remorse; turn once more your head (repent) and you may live an hundred years,' *i.e.*, in human shape (一失足成千古恨, 再回頭是百年身).



The Chinese are, however, far too shrewd observers of human nature to suppose that reformation, even when reduced to its simplest terms as a simple change of direction, will ever be generally practiced. Hence the significant couplet to *Kuan Yin P'u Sa* (觀音菩薩) the so-called Goddess of Mercy, in allusion to her inflexible habit of facing the North, while all the rest of creation fronts the kindly south, 'Why is it Kuan Yin is always seated in a reverse position? Because all living things refuse to turn' (問觀音爲何倒座, 因衆生不肯回頭).

Among the subjects for observation the weather holds a prominent place. Mr. Scarborough gives about forty examples of proverbs of this kind, and the list might be indefinitely extended. Every language can probably furnish rhyming summaries of general experience of atmospheric changes, expressing such as 'If it rains before seven, it will clear before eleven;' 'When the days begin to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen,' etc. But here, as in all departments of proverbial phrase, the Chinese outdistance all competition. Each of the months has some saying in which peculiarities or characteristics of the season are noted, of which the following are specimens.

'If there is uninterrupted cloudy weather in the fifth month, if it is dry in the sixth month, there will be an abundance of food in the seventh and eighth months' (五月連陰六月旱, 七月八月, 吃飽飯).

'On the sixth of the sixth moon, the crops may be seen in ear' 六月六, 看穀秀.

'In the sixth and twelfth moons do not go abroad' (六臘月不出門). These are the seasons of greatest heat and cold.

'If there be a sound of thunder on the fifteenth of the eighth month, everybody will turn thieves' (八月十五一聲雷, 普天之下全是賊).

The connection between a clap of thunder and famine is not obvious even to the Chinese, but the saying signifies their reluctance to have the usual order disturbed (改常).

'A season of autumn rain, and a season of cold; a season of white dew, and a season of frost' (一場秋雨一場涼, 一場白露一場霜).

'By the middle of the tenth moon combing one's hair and washing one's face is all the work to be expected' (十月中梳頭洗臉工), i.e., the days are at their shortest.

'By the middle of the twelfth moon, the skillful woman will spin half a thread more' 臘月半, 巧女多做半條線).

'Half a thread more,' that is to say, than she did when she only combed her head and washed her face, for the days are lengthening.

'By the middle of the seventh month the mosquito's mouth is like a gimlet. By the eighth of the eighth month it is divided up' (七月半, 蚊子嘴似個鑽, 八月八, 蚊子嘴開了花).

Here the second line refers to a point worthy of investigation; the Chinese assert that at the close of the season these insects are seen to have a split across their mouths, like the development of a flower bud, a fact which is said to be verified by the use of the microscope. This circumstance, so far as we know, has not become proverbial in any country but China.

A variation of the above proverb is as follows: 'By the middle of the seventh month they whet their bills; by the middle of the eighth month they stretch out (stiffen) their legs' (七月十五爛嘴兒, 八月十五換腿兒).

The twenty four 'Solar terms' (節氣) distributed throughout the Chinese Calendar afford, upon an average, a singularly accurate description of the seasons to which in the Imperial almanac they are affixed. The relatively uniform climate of China renders possible a minuteness of prediction, which in Great Britain or in North America, would be hazardous. An English farmer who pins his faith to such traditional instructions as 'Upon the twentieth of July, sow your turnips, wet or dry,' might find himself as often out of season as in it. In China, however, the words of the Wise Man are far more literally fulfilled, "To everything there is a season."

'After the Small Snow [about November 22nd] there is no plowing, after the Great Snow [about December 7th] navigation is suspended' (小雪不耕地, 大雪不行船). This saying applies, of course, only to the most northern provinces of China.

From the winter solstice (冬至) onward, the Chinese count nine periods of nine days each (called collectively the Nine Nine 九九), extending about to the second week in March, by which time the trees begin to bud (九盡花開). The characteristics of each of the Nines appear in the following sayings.

'In the first and second Nine keep your hand in your sleeves;

In the third and fourth one may go upon the ice;



'In the fifth and sixth Nine the willows by the river show their green;  
 'In the seventh the rivers open, in the eighth the wild geese appear;  
 'In the ninth the ice has disappeared' (一九二九不出手,三九四九冰上走,五六九河邊看柳,七九河開,八九雁來,九九無冰時).  
 'At the end of the seventh Nine foot travellers carry their extra clothing in a pack' (七九六十三,路上行人把衣担); the increasing warmth rendering it superfluous.

'At the end of the ninth Nine, the farmer eats his dinner in the field' (九九八十一,家中做飯地裏吃).

'By the seventh or eighth of the Twelfth month, two or three people will be frozen to death' (臘七臘八,凍殺人兩三).

According to the Chinese calendar the beginning of Spring (立春) is liable sometimes to fall before the New Year, to which circumstance the following saying refers: 'The New Year follows close upon the new Spring' (打罷新春,是新年).

The "Establishment of Spring" occurs about the end of the sixth of the 'Nine Nines,' at which time the rivers ought (theoretically) to be escaping from their icy fetters, and making for the sea (春打六九頭,海水向東流).

In the following saying the promise of the coming Spring is made prominent, to 'comfort the hearts of the poor, who dread the winter.' 'At the harvest in the eighth moon it is cool, but the ninth moon will be mild'; the tenth moon is the Little Spring (that is, when the productive principle begins to manifest itself); 'in the eleventh moon it is cold for a while; yet in the twelfth moon comes Spring' (八月秋涼九月溫,十月小陽春十一月冷一冷,臘月又打春). The 'little Spring' which appears in November, and the real Spring which falls in January may be safely said to offer only 'cold comfort' to the poor.

Another saying scarcely more adapted to cheer those who are dissatisfied with the season, is the following: 'One may hope in the Nines, but not in the Dog-days' (能盼屬九,不盼初伏). The meaning is that when the Nines come, *the warm weather is approaching* (although somewhat deliberately, as they begin at the winter solstice); whereas in the Dog-days, although hot, *the cold will soon be upon us*!

'After the Grain-in-ear one should not insist upon planting the ground' (過了芒種,不可強種). The term in the Calendar called *Mang Chung*, or Grain-in-the-ear, falls about the sixth of June.

'In the fifth and sixth month there will be rain in the cart ruts  
(五逢六月,車轍雨).

This does not mean, as might be supposed, that this is the time when the roads will be inundated, but that the early rains of summer are at this season so limited in area, that while the ruts in front of a cart may be full of water, those behind may be dry.

'A great drought will not extend beyond the thirteenth of the fifth month' (大旱不過五月十三). It is safe to say that this dictum is *not* founded on a generalized experience.

'In the second and eighth months there is no rule for dress'  
(二八月,亂穿衣).

'In the second and eighth months the ground is like a sieve'  
(二八月地如篩).

The lunar month with all its drawbacks, is a great convenience in enabling every-one to keep track of the movements of the moon.

'By the seventeenth or eighteenth sit down and wait for moon-light' (十七八坐坐等等他). The Chinese horror of going about in the dark is extreme, but appears to apply rather to travelling late at night than in the early morning hours.

'On the twentieth light no lamp,—the moon will appear by the first watch' (二十莫掌燈,月出在一更).

In a country largely given up to agriculture, the signs of rain are most carefully noted in a great variety of sayings.

'When the sun sets with a bright red vapor on the clouds, to-morrow will be hot enough to roast one; when the sunset vapors turn dark, it will be hard to avoid to-morrow's rain' (日沒火燒雲,明天必定晒死人,日落雲吃火,明天雨難躲).

'If there is a fine rain at first, there is sure to be no rain; if a fine rain after the rain, there will certainly be no clear weather' (雨前生毛,必不雨,雨後生毛,必不晴).

'After a long cloudy period it is sure to rain violently, but it will not last' (久陰必下暴雨不長).

'Rain in Spring is as precious as oil' (春雨貴似油).

The Chinese have a firm faith that there are certain days on which rain is *not* to be expected—about the time of the new and of the full moon.

'Do not fear a rain-fall on the first and fifteenth; dread rather clouds on the second and sixteenth' (不怕初一十五下,就怕初二六陰).



The meaning is, that even though rain should actually fall on the days first named, the sky will still clear, but if on the succeeding days the weather is cloudy it will be sure to rain.

'If it rains on the first of the eighth moon, it will be dry until the end of the fifth moon of the next year' (八月初一下一陣, 早到來年五月盡).

'Drought and flood can be determined by the 15th of the seventh moon' (七月十五定旱澇).

'Whether there will or will not be a flood can be seen by the twenty-third of the seventh moon' (淹不淹看七月二十三).

'Fleecy clouds and constant rain,—no clear days' (陰雨連綿, 不晴天). This is a compendious description of the 'rainy season.'

'In time of drought an east wind brings no rain; in seasons of flood a north wind does not ensure fair weather' (旱來東風不下雨, 澇來北風不晴天).

'Early vapors indicate foul weather; late vapors fair weather' (早霞陰, 晚霞晴).

'If there are vapors early in the day, stay at home; if toward night, go a thousand *li*' (早霞不出門, 晚霞行千里).

'Wind comes before the rain' (風是雨的頭).

Many sayings of this sort are employed figuratively, as, for example, the following; 'When the soft winds are in motion, there is hope of the gentle rain' (行下清風望細雨), or, negatively, 'If the spring winds do not blow, how can we expect the summer rain?' (不行春風, 難望夏雨). This means that he who expects a favor must *pay in advance*, and it is on this familiar but important principle that in China nothing can be accomplished without a preliminary present, or a feast. If the soft winds do not first blow, there will be no rain.

'Hearing the wind, and supposing that there must be rain' (聽風卽是雨). According to the proverb just cited, the inference would appear to be just; the meaning, however, is not metereological, but metaphorical. It is said, for instance, of one who repeats a story which he has heard, with gross exaggerations, as if when the wind blows, he cried, 'Hear! It rains!'

It is an encouragement to the youth who is bewildered by such a multiplicity of metereological philosophy, often inconsistent with

itself as with experience, to learn that when he is thirty years old, he will be able to prognosticate for himself. 'When one is past thirty, he can about half comprehend the weather' (人過三十, 測天一半).

The Minister *Hsieh Hsüeh Shih* (解學士), already repeatedly mentioned as one of the most ready poets known to the Chinese, is said to have been walking the streets of Peking one spring day when, the roads being slippery with mud, he fell down. At this misadventure his companions burst into a hearty laugh, but the Minister was ready as usual with the following impromptu verse alluding to this proverb:

春雨滑似油。下的滿街流。  
跌倒解學士。笑殺一羣牛。

'A rain in Spring is as smooth as oil  
But it fills the street and it daubs the soil,  
It trips me up, and my clothes besmears,  
Which tickles to death a herd of steers.'

The milky way serves as the poor man's almanac. 'When the heavenly river flows diagonally across the sky, put on your wadded clothes' (天河掉角, 要褲要襖), *i.e.*, autumn impends. 'When the milky way divides, bring out your thin garments' (天河劈叉, 要褲要褂), *i.e.*, warm weather approaches.

The Abbe Huc, in his entertaining "Travels in the Chinese Empire," affirms that the Chinese have a method of telling time according to the dilatation or expansion of the eyes of a cat. The aperture of the pupil is affected by the position of the sun, and the character of the light, even when the day is cloudy. This story, like many other statements of the same author, has been the subject of ridicule, for no other apparent reason than that some other persons never ascertained the fact for themselves.

The use of what M. Huc calls the 'Cat-clock,'\* is far from uncommon, and here are its rules: 'From 11 to 1 and from 5 to 7 (a.m. and p.m.) merely a single thread'; 'From 7 to 9 and from 1 to 3 (a.m. and p.m.) pointed at each end'; 'From 9 to 11 and from 3 to 5 (a.m. and p.m.) round and full orb'd' (子午卯酉一條線, 寅申己亥兩頭尖, 辰戌丑未圓上圓).

\* It has been plausibly suggested that this connection between the Cat and the time of day, must have given rise to the legend 'Hickory, Dickory, Dock, The Mouse ran up the Clock.'



## PROVERBS CONTAINING MEDICAL ADVICE.

Many Chinese proverbs contain bits of medical advice, or record some generalized observation, and, like other sayings, range through all the various classes from the most general to the most specific. Thus: 'Fruit finds a market in the autumn, and drugs in the spring' (秋賣菓子春賣藥).

'If one does not store up vital force in winter, he will be sure to suffer from an epidemic in the spring' (冬不藏精, 春必瘟病).

'If you wish your children to have a quiet life, let them always be a little hungry and cold' (若要小兒安, 常帶三分飢和寒).

This sage counsel is from the medical books, and appears to be generally acted upon. It is believed that if children are too well fed, and too warm, their diseases will be much more severe than otherwise. 'Children can endure very severe illness' (小孩子擔的了十分病). This circumstance, which is axiomatic with the Chinese, is thought to be due to compliance with the preceding directions.

'If there is no disease in the viscera, the patient will not die' (肚子裏沒病死不了人).

Some of these directions for the preservation of health, are analogous to our 'Starve a fever, and stuff a cold,' and are not more rational. Thus, 'Nourish the eyes, starve a boil' (保眼餓瘡). 'Bathe with a full stomach, shave the head when hungry' (飽洗澡, 餓剃頭). 'Giddiness' is prevented by the first practice, and serious injury to digestion by the second.

'Those who play on stringed instruments play best when full; the best singing is when the singer is hungry' (飽彈, 餓唱).

The pubic region (丹田) is the ultimate source (according to Chinese anatomy) of the breath. If a hearty meal is superimposed on the 'source of the breath,' it is then bad for the singing.

'Light during the day, but severe at night; such a disease, if not speedily cured, will soon put an end to life' (白輕夜重, 不早治沒命).

'If one does not die at the age of sixty-six he will at least lose a piece of his flesh' (六十六不死去塊肉).

This year is the end of one of the natural stages in the journey of life. If death is escaped, some physical evil will ensue, like losing a part of one's flesh. The following is predicated upon the

same theory: 'At seventy-three and eighty-four, if Yen Wang does not summon a man he will die of himself' (七十三八十四閻王不叫自己死).

In consideration of this circumstance, it is necessary to be cautious in exercising hospitality to the old. 'People of seventy you should not keep over night; and do not invite a person of eighty to sit down' (七十不留宿, 八十不留坐). It would be very awkward and undesirable to have these old folks die on one's premises, hence, like Little Jo, they should be urged to "move on."

'Exhaustion of vital force, consumption, dropsy, and stricture of the esophagus,—those who exhibit these symptoms, are the invited guests of Yen Wang' (乾勞氣膨噎, 閻王請的客).

It is related of T'eng T'ung (鄧通), a favorite of a certain Han Dynasty Emperor, that a fortune teller declared that he would die of starvation. The minister inquired if there was no escape from this fate, and was informed that nothing would serve to avert it but the cultivation of 'Virtue.' Teng T'ung naturally discredited the prophecy, but one day while playing at chess with the Emperor, he mentioned the prediction. The Emperor laughed, and observed that the words of the fortune teller were idle and silly, for how could a favorite minister of a prince be starved? Yet, lest such a contingency should come to pass, he bestowed upon his minister a furnace for coining cash—in other words a small mint—by the aid of which he could lay up a 'Money mountain,' and then, said he, we shall see if you will starve. In course of time, however, the minister was attacked by the fatal yeh (噎) or stricture in the gullet, and after all died of starvation, a fate which he might have avoided had he but remembered to accumulate virtue (積德). Hence the saying, 'T'eng T'ung though he had a mountain of money could not escape death by starvation' (鄧通有錢山, 竟會餓死).

In the doctrine of visible and present rewards and punishments, especially in those of a physical nature, the Chinese as we have seen, have a firm faith. 'Diseases in the hands and feet have their origin in a vicious heart' (手脚無善症).

'When the eruption of itch appears on one's face, he should get ready a mat' (疥到了臉着蓆捲), to bury himself where-withal, for he will certainly die.

'In Spring keep well covered, in Autumn delay putting on thick garments, and you will never be sick' (春搗秋凍, 到老沒



病). By being 'well covered in Spring,' is meant, waiting until the settled warm weather comes, before changing one's dress.

'A cold is to be dreaded by the aged; dysentery is to be feared by the young' (老怕傷寒, 少怕痢疾).

'The strength of the aged is like spring cold, or the heat after harvest' (老健春寒秋後熱).

'Fat persons can endure cold' (從來胖人多耐冷).

'At thirty the countenance alters' (人過三十容顏改).

'He that takes medicine and neglects to diet himself, wastes the skill of the physician' (吃藥不忌口, 枉費大夫的手).

'When the phlegm is dark colored, the disease is light, if yellow the disease is severe, but if white it is fatal' (黑痰輕, 黃痰重, 白痰要了命).

'Though one may have money, he will hardly be able to buy a July dysentery' (有錢難買六月瘧). One would suppose that most persons would be willing to do without 'dysenterys' in any month, but according to Chinese notions, this disease is a healthful vent for noxious 'humors,' and therefore valuable as a preventive of something worse.

'One may eat to the full of peaches, but apricots will do you harm; beneath a plum tree they bury the dead' (桃飽, 杏傷身, 李子樹下埋死人). The meaning is that too many plums are likely to be immediately fatal.

'If you wish to attract the south wind you must open the north window' (要求南風, 須開北牖). This means that the passages of the body must be kept in order, to secure health, and is equivalent to the Scotch aphorism: 'Fear God, and *keep the bo'ols open*.' Also, of reciprocity in favor.

'Internal practitioners do not undertake to cure asthma; external practitioners do not try to cure ring-worm. If they attempt it, they must wish to injure their reputations' (內科不治喘, 外科不治癬, 治時討傷臉).

An intelligent Chinese teacher who lived in an open port where thousands of cases of every form of disease had been successfully treated—among them many cases of ring-worm—penned the following note to this proverb, 'This affection cannot be cured by the most experienced practitioners, *whether Chinese or foreigners!*'

'When the heart moves, the heart's blood comes in tides' (心動, 則心血來潮). This saying is based upon the theory of

the circulation of the blood, set forth in the Treatise on the Mystery of the Pulse (脉訣書) by *Wang Shu Ho* (王叔和). This writer assumes a vital principle (神氣) which has its seat in the heart, and is bright like the flame of a lamp. A 'pile of blood' (有血一堆) the center of the heart, is devoted exclusively to covering and nourishing (培養) this vital force, which seems to occupy this nest made for it by this part of the blood detailed for the purpose, much as a rabbit lives in a warren. By day the thoughts are active, at which time the vital principle is outside of its burrow, but at night when fatigue comes on, the force draws itself in under the pile of blood, to be there recuperated by a night's nourishment. In early life the vital principle readily returns to this retreat, which is the reason that young people are sleepy at night; but in advancing years, the supply of blood runs short, so that the vital force finds it hard to bury itself under it! Forgetfulness is due to the same cause.

Those who practice the Taoist art of refining the spirit, say that the reason that they do not grow weary like others, when the spirit is in retirement in its nest, is that they have acquired the art of controlling it in such a way as to prevent even the smallest mental activity (a claim in itself by no means improbable). In case any automatic motion of the heart is experienced in spite of their efforts, this is because somewhere in the universe an event is occurring which concerns him whose heart thus mechanically responds!

A current proverb observes that 'The study of the works of *Wang Shu Ho* is not so good as clinical practice' (熟讀王叔和不如臨症多), a dictum which the average Occidental Reader will doubtless cordially endorse. No wonder too, that another proverb declares that, To be a famous physician, it is by no means necessary to recognize many characters' (名醫何必多識字).\*

\* Whatever the real ignorance of the medical practitioner, he knows enough to impose upon those who are even more ignorant than himself. The whole theory of the treatment of diseases, and of discrimination in the qualities and uses of drugs, is popularly regarded (and with reason) as beyond the comprehension of the finite mind. 'Even gods and fairies can with difficulty distinguish between pills, powders, plasters and boluses' (神仙難辯丸散膏丹). It is a standing jest, that the dealer in sliced dumplings having disposed of all that part of his stock which has dates intermixed, rolls the remainder into pellets, which are taken to a country village, and sold for pills! This idea is embodied in the proverbial expression, 'Selling dumpling pills' (賣的是切糕丸), a phrase which is employed, like the English 'bread pills'.



Many Chinese proverbs cluster around a single individual, of which those referring to Wu Ta Lang have been already quoted as examples. Similar and yet distinct are those proverbial sayings in which not a specific but a generic subject is introduced, which affords full scope for every variety of predicate supposed to be appropriate to the class, and by inference to any one resembling the class. Proverbs of this sort may have for their subject either gods or men—and also women. The following examples will illustrate their character.

One of the most unimportant characters in the Chinese Pantheon is the tutelary god of the soil, the T'u Ti Yeh (土地爺). He is not to be confounded with the 'god of the land' *she* (社), (for which see Mayer's Manual Nos. 181 and 605.), the functions of which are supposed to relate to agriculture and the crops. The *t'u ti* looks after the souls of the dead, and stands in the same relation to the city god (Ch'eng Hwang 城隍) that the local constable (地保) does to the District Magistrate. When a person dies, the relatives go to the *t'u ti* temple to report the fact to him, and to beg him to communicate it to the city-god.

'The *t'u ti* of a village is efficacious only at home' (當鄉土地, 當鄉靈). This saying is used to show that persons have no influence away from home.

A man is less valued in proportion as he is distant from the place of his origin, but with merchandise the opposite is the case (人離鄉賤, 貨離鄉貴). The temple to the *t'u ti* is the only one which is nearly always, but not universally, to be found in every village.

If the village is large it may have two such temples, one at each end, as large towns often have more than one local constable. The *t'u ti* at the east end is powerless at the west end (東頭的土地, 西頭不靈).

The original of the *t'u ti* is popularly supposed to have been Han Yü (韓愈), otherwise known as Han Wen Kung (韓文公). (See Mayer's Manual, No. 158.) That so great a man should have been degraded to such a trifling office as that of *t'u ti* is regarded as very unbecoming. Hence the couplet, 'Once a famous scholar of the T'ang Dynasty, but now only a local god in a village' (昔爲唐朝進士第, 今作當莊土地神).

The *t'u ti* stands as a type of insignificance. 'The *t'u ti* munching a cake,—he cannot bear any large offering' (土地爺吃

餽餽, 擔不了大供獻). As ordinarily spoken, the word translated 'munching' is not *ch'ih* to eat, but *tai*, for which there is no character.

The saying is used of any petty officials with trifling emoluments, of a small man meeting with good fortune which he cannot support, etc.

Among women the Old Lady is the butt of much good-natured banter. 'Like an old lady's tooth,—loose' (老太太的牙, 活了). said of one with no decision, with whom "everything is an open question."

'An old lady wearing spectacles,—all for show' (老太太戴眼鏡, 虛設). She cannot read and glasses are of no use. Of useless appendages—men or things.

'An old lady riding in a cart,—unstable equilibrium' (老太太坐車, 不穩當). Her small feet doubled under her make her seat insecure. Of anything not firmly placed.

'An old lady's toes,—oppressed for a whole life time' (老太太的腳指頭, 臥囊一輩子). The expressive colloquialism *wo nang*, *q.d.* compelled to sleep in a bag, signifies being imposed upon (受委屈). Foot-binding permanently suppresses the toes. Used of those who never get their rights.

'An old lady looking at the flowered lanterns,—gazing as she goes' (老太太逛燈, 走着瞧). This is said in reply to a doubt thrown upon the accuracy of something which has been affirmed. 'If you do not believe it,—an old lady looking at the flowered lantern,' *i.e.*, go and see (走着瞧) for yourself.

'Like an old lady's food,—good' (老太太吃的, 是好的). Because of the respect felt for her by her children and her grandchildren, she is supposed to be nourished on the best that is to be had;—met. of men and things.

'An old lady attending a funeral,—coming on behind' (老太太送殯, 走了後頭了). Women in a funeral procession follow the coffin. Met. of one who is behind—late.

'An old lady trying to bite with her teeth,—forgetting that she has none' (老太太咬牙, 忘了沒有咧). Used of those who make purchases, and find they have no money, and in other similar cases.

#### THE OLD VILLAGER.

The Old Man from the Country Village does heavy duty in Chinese Proverbs, many examples of which have been already intro-



duced. Attention has been repeatedly called to that quality of Chinese expressions, by which they are made to hint much, while saying almost nothing. In this way it is easy to employ language which, without openly attacking one, exposes him to blame or ridicule (誚皮話).

'The old villager' is employed in this cheerful duty in a great variety of ways. It is not always, not most frequently, his inexperience and general absurdity which is exposed to derision, but also the objects themselves in regard to which the countryman is perpetually falling into the most preposterous errors. This will appear in the appended examples.

'The old countryman having never seen a China shop, a crockery mountain' (莊家老兒未見過磁器鋪, 好像伙山).

'The old villager buying a coffin,—he lies down in it to measure the length' (莊家老兒買棺材, 躺下試一試). Such a proceeding would, of course, shock the propriety of the Chinese. Said in ridicule of one who is unable to calculate properly.

'The old countryman mistaking Narcissus for single bulbs of garlic' (莊家老兒不認的水仙花獨頭蒜). This variety of garlic, as well as turnips which have begun to decay inside are considered as especially acrid (黑心的蘿蔔獨頭的蒜).

'The old countryman taking snuff,—a violent fit of weeping' (莊家老兒聞鼻烟, 滿眼流淚). Said of one who is shedding tears profusely.

'The old villager never having seen a peacock,—what a big tailed hawk!' (莊家老兒不認的孔雀, 大尾巴鷹). In ridicule of persons of great pretensions.

'The old countryman at a theater, a perfect hubbub' (莊家老兒看戲, 熱熱鬧鬧). Said of the clatter of many tongues.

There is probably no other amusement of the Chinese to which they are all so passionately addicted as witnessing theatricals, much of which is by no means comprehended. The proverb truly says that those that act in plays are insane (in their appearance) and those who look on, are idiots (in their inability to take it in), (唱戲的是瘋子看戲的是傻子).

'The old countryman eating grasshoppers,—food from heaven' (莊家老兒吃螞蚱, 天賜的活食). Said of those who obtain something of which there was no reasonable prospect.

'The old villager never having seen a bride's dowry sent,—a whole family moving' (莊家老兒未見過送嫁粧的, 大搬家).

The dowry of the bride is distributed so as to make the greatest possible display, and borne through all the principal streets to be seen of men' (and women). Said of removals, etc.

'The old man from the country who has never seen the temple of the city god,—how many devils!' (莊家老兒未見城隍廟, 鬼不少).

Petty speculations or 'squeezes' are called *kuei-ping* (鬼病). The intimation is that these are numerous.

The old countryman having an interview with the Emperor,—very little talking, and a great deal of head knocking' (莊家老兒見皇上, 少說話, 多叩頭). Said in ridicule of persons who are slow of speech, and who merely assent to what others say.

'The old villager never having seen a clay image,—made by man but not reared by man' (莊家老兒未見過泥人, 是人做的不是人養的).

This is a specimen of the too redundant class of abusive proverbs (罵人的話). The implication is, that the person in question is not fit to be called a man.

'The old countryman who has never seen stilt walkers,—half the body not human' (莊家老兒未見過高蹺, 半截不是人養的). Used like the last.

'The old villager who doesn't know fire-works,—one whiff of smoke, and it is gone' (莊家老兒不認的起花, 一溜烟的跑了). Of anything which speedily disappears.

'The old countryman who has never seen the wooden fish [used by the priests to pound on], the thing is always getting beaten' (莊家老兒未見過木魚子, 挨打的物). Said in allusion to any one who is perpetually abused—beaten or reviled.

'The old villager gathering in his harvest,—only a handful' (莊家老兒收秋, 一把兒). The Chinese farmer, like those in other lands, is supposed to be a born croaker, and will never admit that his crops—be they never so good—are more than a 'handful.' The first clause is employed to suggest a small quantity.

'The old countryman who does not recognize the sign of a vermicelli shop,—tangles and snarls (莊家老兒不認的切麵的幌子, 絲絲蘿蘿). The swinging signs in front of Chinese shops are often intended to indicate by a picture the articles sold. Thus



the sign of the vermicelli shop is a quantity of gilt paper cut in narrow strips, in imitation of the strips of dough in which the shop deals. Used of anything confused.

'The old villager is born perverse; the more he is pressed the more he refuses to sell' (莊稼老生的乖, 越趕越不賣).

#### THE TRAVELS TO THE WEST.

One of the most often quoted Chinese books is called the *Hsi Yu Chi* (西遊記) or 'Travels to the West,' in which a Master called *T'ang San Tsang* (唐三藏), with his three pupils, is represented as going to India in quest of the Buddhist Sacred Books.

The relation between the *Hsi Yu Chi* and the 'Three Religions,' is analagous to that between the Pilgrim's Progress and Christianity. The parallel might be drawn out at length, and in considerable detail. Each of these books consists of a narrative of a journey undertaken with a religious motive. In each case the journey is long, abounds in difficulties, and in surprising adventures. Each narrative constantly invokes the aid of the supernatural. In each case the characters bear symbolical names, and in each case every detail is intended to have an allegorical significance. Each of these books is among the most widely known, and the most popular work in the language in which it is written, and in the case of each the exciting adventure, the liberal admixture of the supernatural, and the profound lessons meant to be conveyed, have taken a strong hold of the popular mind.

The *Hsi Yu Chi* furnishes abundant material for theatrical performances, and for the tales of professional story-tellers, and here as in other cases, additions and embellishments are often interwoven to increase the interest of the hearer, so that the principal characters are as well known to the common people as any in real history; and are often as much better known than the occurrences of sober history as their adventures are more exciting and entertaining.

There is the story of a little girl in a Christian land, whose imagination was fired with what she had read of the pilgrimage of Christian to the Celestial City, and who having inwardly resolved to follow his example made her way to a distant farm-house, and inquired for the House of the Interpreter.

Improbable as it might have seemed, there can be no doubt that the Travels toward the West are capable of affecting in a

similar manner, even the impassive Chinese. The writer has heard of a man who had read the *Hsi Yu Chi*, until its incidents became to him as real as those of Bunyan's Dream were to the little girl. At last he abandoned his home, his family, and all that he had, and set out on a pilgrimage himself, and was never heard of more.

The name of two characters in the *Hsi Yu Chi* have become identified with a considerable number of almost universally current proverbs, some of them containing allusions to details of the narrative, while others are suggested by the most striking characteristics of the actors in the story.

The leading character is *Sun Wu K'ung* (孫悟空), who was developed by natural evolution out of a stone, and who began life as a Monkey. The restlessness, imitativeness, and cunning which characterize this animal are prominent everywhere, and hence he is popularly designed *Sun* the Monkey (孫猴兒).

A person who has seen a great deal of life is said to be: 'Like *Sun Hou Erh*,—with a wide experience' (屬孫猴兒的, 見識到不少).

'*Sun Hou Erh's* gold banded club,—large when you wish it to be large, and small when you wish it to be small' (孫猴兒的金箍棒, 要大就大, 要小就小).

This wonderful weapon was obtained by *Sun Wu K'ung* from the palace of *Kuan Yin P'u Sa*. When reduced to its smallest proportions it could be carried in the ear like a needle, but when its possessor wished it expanded, it became a mighty iron beam, terrible to gods and men. The expression is used, for example, of lawsuits which at first are insignificant, but which the *Yamên* followers well know how to expand to ruinous dimensions.

'*Sun Hou Erh* turning somersaults,—in uninterrupted succession' (孫猴兒打跟頭, 連着的). Among the supernatural accomplishments which *Sun* acquired, was that of turning somersaults without intermission to the extent of eighteen thousand *li* (or perhaps rather eighteen thousand *li* at one somersault). This amazing celerity of motion, as well as the circumstance that he was able to transform himself into two-and-seventy different shapes, rendered him a most formidable antagonist. The saying is employed of events which follow each other in rapid succession, as the arrival of one guest immediately upon the departure of another.



The irrepressible disposition of *Sun* (by which is figured the untamable restlessness of the human heart)\* was constantly leading him into an audacious measuring of his strength with that of the gods, to whom he gave much trouble. *Yü Huang* (玉皇) found it necessary to call in the aid of Buddha, who allowed *Sun Hou Erh* to turn as many somersaults as he pleased, in order to demonstrate to *Sun* that his own power was greater than *Yü Huang's*. *Sun* accordingly set himself into revolution, and traversed an enormous distance until he came to the very limits of creation, where he found five mighty carnation colored pillars which support the heavens. He then returned, and told Buddha what he had seen and that he had been to the end of all things. Buddha, however, informed him that he had all the while been turning over in Buddha's palm, and that the pillars of heaven which he described were the fingers of Buddha's hand where they bend upward! As *Sun* refused to believe this, the experiment was repeated, when Buddha seized him fast. Hence the proverb, '*Sun Wu K'ung* turning somersaults,—he cannot get out of the palm of Buddha's hand' (孫悟空打跟頭, 打不過佛爺把掌心).

In striking contradistinction to the prominent activity of *Sun Hou Erh*, is the inconspicuousness of another of the pupils, *Sha Wu Ching* (沙悟靜), by whom is denoted, as the name implies, the passive side of man's nature. This individual does little but trudge along behind, with his load on his shoulder, and there is nothing in his career to furnish materials for proverbial allusion.

The remaining pupil, on the other hand, *Chu Wu Neng* (豬悟能), is in everybody's mouth. He represents the animal

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\* For this restlessness of the human heart, the Chinese have several familiar similes, as, for example, a flying steed: 'The heart is like running a horse on the level plain, easily loosed, but restrained with difficulty' (心似平原走馬, 易放難收), 'One's heart like the unresting hoofs of a steed' (心中像馬不停蹄的), 'The heart a Monkey, the will a horse' (心猿意馬). The erratic behavior of *Sun Wu K'ung*, has given rise to the saying: 'The heart of man is the greatest monster and prodigy in the world' (人心乃是天下第一的个妖精怪物).

Upon this proverb, a Chinese teacher made a characteristically Chinese comment, to show *why* the heart is so inordinately restless. He first mentions that in the twelve 'earth-stems' (地支) the character for Monkey is invariably associated with the character *shen*, or in Chinese phraseology, 'belongs to' it (猴屬申). He then affirms, on what grounds is not obvious, that this same *shen* 'belongs to' the heart (申屬心), after which no one will require further explanation of the fact that the heart is like a Monkey.

instincts of human nature. His surname indicates that his characteristics were those of a swine. He is commonly called *Chu Pa Chieh* or singly *Pa Chieh* (八戒).\*

The proverbs in which his name is introduced,—several of which have been already cited in another connection—although occasionally referring to incidents in the story, are principally allusions to his disposition and appearance, which were those of a hog. In pictures he is depicted with the head of a swine, and this conception of him must be borne in mind in order to understand the manner in which his name is used. This class of sayings consequently furnish copious materials for the oblique reviling, for which, as we have often had occasion to observe, the Chinese have a strong *penchant*.

'*Chu Pa Chieh* eating ginseng fruit,—no flavor' (豬八戒吃人參果, 沒味). On their travels, the party reached a certain *Wan Shou Shan* (萬壽山), where was a temple within the precincts of which grew a tree which was planted when the heavens and earth were separated. Its roots extended so as to embrace all the Four Continents (四大部洲). Its fruit is called *Jen shen kuo*. The tree was three thousand years in producing a flower, another three thousand years in developing the fruit, and as much longer in ripening it. After all this preparation, only thirty fruits could ripen in ten thousand years. The shape of the fruit was like that of a new born child, the 'four limbs and hundred members' all complete. Whoever was fortunate enough even to smell of this fruit, lived to the age of three hundred and sixty years, but he who ate of it would live to be forty-seven thousand years old!

The old priest who kept the *Wan Shou Shan* was absent when *Tang San Tsang* arrived, but had left word with the two lads in charge to set before the guest two fruits from this tree. But *Tang Tsang* was horror struck at the sight of these vegetable Infants, which he supposed to be human, refusing to believe that they grew on a tree. His disciples, overhearing the conversation of the lads

\* No reference is made in Mr. Scarborough's volume to *Chu Pa Chieh*. In Mr. Doolittle's numerous lists, his name occurs but once (p. 689) as follows:—(豬八戒頑鴨子, 各愛毛皮), i.e., '*Chu Pa Chieh* playing with a duck, each admired the other's exterior.' The meaning is that *Chu Pa Chieh* was so exactly like a real swine that even the duck was deceived. The translator, however, appears to have found this quite incomprehensible, and ignoring the 'Eight Precepts' (八戒) renders the sentence: 'the hog and the duck played together,' etc.



who had presented the fruit to *Tang Tsang*, learned that it grew in one of the rear courts, and resolved to secure one for each of them. This was finally accomplished, after great difficulties, by *Sun Hou Erh*, who obtained the golden rod, with which alone they could be knocked from the lofty tree, climbed it by means of his magical powers and secured the fruit. When they came to eat it, *Chu Pa Chieh*, whose mouth and throat were large, swallowed his whole at one gulp, and then asked his comrades what its taste was, as he did not perceive any. The saying is used of anything which has no flavor (淡而無味), as uninteresting or unintelligible talk, etc.

'*Chu Pa Chieh* reflected in a mirror,—neither the original nor the reflection like a man' (豬八戒照鏡子, 裏外不是個人兒).

This is applied to middlemen in a bargain, go-betweens, etc. who endeavor to please both parties, but who only succeed in displeasing both.

'*Chu Pa Chieh* carrying under his arm half a quire of coarse brown paper,—vain pretence of being a literary man' (豬八戒挾着一刀火紙, 混充讀書人).

'*Chu Pa Chieh* wearing a long robe,—idle pretence of being a respectable character' (豬八戒穿袍子, 混充局統人).

'*Chu Pa Chieh* wearing spectacles,—to hide his face' (豬八戒戴眼鏡子, 遮羞臉兒). Of persons trying to conceal their shame.

'*Chu Pa Chieh* eating the refuse of brewer's malt,—plenty of wine and full meals' (豬八戒饅酒糟, 酒足飯飽). This refuse is used to feed hogs, etc. Employed in derision of a great eater.

'*Chu Pa Chieh* wearing a helmet,—vain pretence of being a great general' (豬八戒戴頭盔, 混充大將軍). In ridicule of empty self-assertion.

'*Chu Pa Chieh* singing a ballad,—what a rhythm, and what a tune!' (豬八戒唱小曲兒, 甚麼腔調). Met. of disagreeable speech, bad singing, etc.

'*Chu Pa Chieh* when the roll is called—not to be reckoned as a man' (豬八戒點名, 不算人數兒). One of the many forms in which this person's name is used in oblique vilification, *q.d.*, he is not worthy to be counted a man.

'*Chu Pa Chieh* rearing children,—enough to frighten them to death!' (豬八戒養孩子, 嚇死人).

'*Chu Pa Chieh* selling fried pig liver,—injuring his own flesh and blood' (豬八戒賣炸肝兒, 自殘骨肉).

'*Chu Pa Chieh* selling jelly' (made of green beans, and also of other material), the man and his goods inferior, but well suited to each other (豬八戒賣涼粉, 人物不及調和好).

'*Chu Pa Chieh* selling rushes,—an insignificant man, and poor goods' (豬八戒賣蒲子, 人鬆貨不高). This saying, like a similar one previously quoted concerning *Wu Ta Lang*, is used to indicate a uniformity of mediocrity or badness, as in the case of master and servants, etc.

'Like *Chu Pa Chieh*,—striking backward with his rake' (屬豬八戒的, 倒撿一耙). *Chu Pa Chieh* had a weapon shaped like a rake, with nine teeth (金兜拐). The expression is used of one who is 'hoisted with his own petard,'—as when he complains that another person has stolen his goods, and is met with the accusation of being himself a thief.

Attention has been called (under the head of Poems), to the circumstance that, according to the Chinese way of thinking, the 'Three Religions' have all a common basis (三教歸一). To exhibit in a clear and forcible manner how naturally a Chinese yields his hearty assent to a proposition which appears to an Occidental preposterous, is perhaps the principal value of the *Hsi Yu Chi*. Mentally to follow the steps of the process by which Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are made to coalesce, as easily as three separate clouds blend into one common vapor, is as difficult as to pursue one of those amphibians which are now in the water, now in the air, and the next instant plunged fathoms deep in mud.

As a fitting sequel to the quotations from the *Travels to the West*, may be introduced a Chinese Allegory which has for its subject the essential unity of the Three Doctrines. The story, which is called the Three Doctrines Struggling for Preeminence (三教爭先), runs that in a certain village a 'Hall of the Three Doctrines' (三教堂) had lately been erected, in which, as is usual in those structures, Buddha—although a Foreigner in China—occupied the place of honor in the center, with Lao Chiün, the founder of Taoism on his left, and Confucius upon his right.

A party of Confucian students happened along, and seeing their Patron within, stopped to make the usual prostrations. On entering, and finding Buddha in the center, they were much displeased, exclaiming, 'Our Doctrine is surely superior to all others'; why, then, have they put our Master in an inferior position. With



these words, they proceeded to remove Buddha from his elevation, and put Confucius in his place. Recalling the adage: 'Intelligent men perform no dark deeds' (明人不作暗事), they left a verse upon the wall, intended to justify their action, as follows:—

三教之中儒數魁。金榜題名中棘闈。  
獨占鰲頭騎駿馬。誰人不知名利得。  
可笑釋道門人子。萬世不得這事爲。

'Three Schools there are of Doctrines—the Confucian heads them all,  
With its golden list of graduates within the thorny wall;  
They stand upon Behemoth's head, bestride the splendid steed,  
Who knows not that in Fame and Wealth 'tis we that best succeed?  
To these Preposterous Priests alike such pleasures are denied,  
Nor could they in ten thousand ages gain them if they tried.'

Having accomplished their object, the Confucianists went their way. Not long after a band of Taoist priests passed that way, and seeing the Hall of Three Doctrines invitingly open entered to pay the usual respects to their Master. Perceiving that *Lao Chün* was placed at one side, they were extremely dissatisfied, and cried, 'Of all the Doctrines ours is the most honorable. How then is its founder shoved aside?' And with that, they removed Confucius from his newly acquired pedestal, and put *Lao Chün* in his stead. Remembering, however, that 'Intelligent men perform no dark deeds,' they also left a verse upon the walls, explaining and defending their act, as follows:—

三教之中道門高。儒釋不及俺的腰。  
廣寒宮裏去赴筵。王母請俺赴蟠桃。  
可笑儒釋門人子。萬世不得這逍遙。

'The Sect of Reason towers sublime and takes the leadership,  
Its boastful rivals can't stretch up to touch the Taoist hip;  
To banquets in the Heavenly Halls we only may repair,  
The Peach of Immortality with us does *Wang Mu* share.  
To Buddhists and Confucianists our pleasures are denied,  
Nor could they in ten thousand ages gain them if they tried.'

The Taoists were no sooner gone, than a strolling company of Buddhist priests, seeing a new Temple to the Three Doctrines, were impelled to go in and worship the great originator of their system. But when they beheld Buddha degraded from his hereditary pre-eminence, and thrust to one side, they were even more annoyed than the Confucianists and the Taoists had been. 'What!' said

they angrily, 'who ever heard of a Temple to the Three Doctrines in which Buddha was not in the middle?' With these words, they shifted Buddha to his former place. Reflecting that 'Intelligent men perform no dark deeds,' they too left upon the wall a verse to explain and justify what they had done, as follows:—

三教之中佛門強。閉目悟空靈性光。  
撒下蒲團蓮臺坐。掃盡地獄化天堂。  
可笑儒道門人子。螢火怎比日月光。

'The Buddhist Doctrine is the best—our eyes we seal up tight.  
Reflecting on a vacuum will flood the soul with light.  
Thus seated on the lotus stage our rushy mats we spread,  
The Hell within is purged away, and Heaven is gained instead.  
These Taoists and Confucianists are ludicrously blind,  
How can a glow-worm's light compete with sun and moon combined?'

The verse was scarcely written when the parties of Confucianists and Taoists, who had met and quarreled upon the road, returned to the Temple to complete their argument in the very presence of their respective Divinities. The result of this rencounter was a fierce dispute between the adherents of the different Sects, each wrangling for the precedence, and neither yielding anything to the others. This acrimonious dispute was interrupted by the appearance of an Old Man, venerable in appearance, who, perceiving the nature of the controversy, and that each party had in turn written a verse in its own defense, seized the pen, and indited another stanza, as follows:—

先有五當後有天。宏教真君把道傳。  
先制金木水火土。生老病死在後邊。  
末留仁義禮智信。三教本是一脈傳。  
勸衆不必爭強勝。能說不行是枉然。

'At first were Five Existences, and then the Heavens were framed.  
The Prince who grasped the mighty truth his doctrine now proclaimed.  
First was created Metal, Wood, with Water, Fire, and Earth.  
But Life and Sickness, Age and Death had all a later birth.  
The Constant Virtues last were fixed, to guide the human course;  
The Three Religions thus are seen to have one common source.  
I urge you all to cease disputes and wranglings for the lead.  
The power to talk, but not to act, is valueless indeed.'

Upon reading what the Old Man had written, the Confucianists, the Taoists and the Buddhists were each filled with shame, and all went their several ways.



## CHINESE FABLES.

Attention has been already called in another connection to the use by the Chinese of Fables (sometimes vaguely called *Yü I* 寓意). A few specimens from the Virtue Books, will show the mode in which these allegorical forms of instruction are employed, in illustration of popular proverbs quoted as incentives to morality.\*

The first is a kind of variation of the allegory just given. In a certain temple images of Buddha and of *Lao Chün* had been set up, the latter in the place of honor to the left. A Buddhist priest seeing this, was much displeased, exclaiming: 'The Doctrine of Buddha is vast in scope, how is it that *Lao Chün* takes precedence?' With these words he changed the place of the images. After this, a Taoist priest seeing what was done, was greatly vexed, and said, 'Our Taoist Doctrine is the most honorable of all, how is it then that Buddha has the place of honor?' So saying he changed the images back again. This happened so frequently, that by degrees the mud images were so much injured that they crumbled into fragments. *Lao Chün* laughing said to Buddha, 'You and I are the best of friends, but all this trouble has been caused by the jealousy of a couple of narrow-minded priests.'

Moral: An open enemy is better than an indiscreet friend. Third Parties are those who promote quarrels. 'A broken rush fan shakes in each direction'† (破蒲扇, 兩邊搖).

'Do not fan with the wind (a fire kindled expressly to be fanned), nor set in antagonism others (who have no enmity toward one another)' (別煽風兒攏對的).

Curing a Crooked Back. A certain doctor boasted of his skill in curing curvature of the spine, claiming that though a back were as crooked as that of a shrimp, or as bent as a bow; yea though the head were on a level with the loins, if he were but called the back would become forthwith as straight as a bamboo pen. A man with a crooked back believed these professions, and sent for the

\* The couplet already quoted as made at the expense of *Yüan Shao* (袁紹), "With the body of a Sheep, clothed in a Tiger's skin, merit can never be achieved; the feathers of the Phoenix united to the liver of a Chicken cannot accomplish results" embodies a Fable, substantially the same as the familiar one of *Æsop*, entitled 'The Ass in the Lion's skin.' It is referred to in Chinese works on the art of war, in the words, 'The disgrace incurred by the sheep that went into battle clad in a Tiger's skin' 羊質虎皮之辱.

† A rush fan is made with the top bent to one side, so as to catch the air like a bowl. When the fan is broken, it works like any other, in both directions.

doctor, who laid the patient on his back over a plank with another plank on top of him, binding the two together with strong ropes drawn very tight. The patient, who was put in extreme pain, screamed to the doctor to desist, but the latter would not listen, and only put on the more pressure. The crooked back was straightened, but in the process of the cure the patient died. The bystanders seized the doctor, to beat him, but he remonstrated, saying, 'I only agreed to remedy the curvature of the spine but I never undertook to guarantee that the patient would live through it!'

Moral: Doctors, usurers, and those who stir up law-suits, care only for their own gain, disregarding altogether the sufferings of their victims. 'Cooks never make up for the flour which they spoil' (沒有賠麪的厨子). 'A doctor kills his patient, but he suffers no penalty' (醫生治病, 治死不抵償). 'A doctor understands how to administer the eighteen incompatible drugs; if he kills his patient it is like throwing down a bowl' \* (醫生會了十八反, 治死人, 如同摔個碗).

The Temple Subscription. A plainly dressed military officer of low rank, was taken by a Buddhist Priest for a common civilian, and treated accordingly. The military man said to the priest, 'I perceive that your temple is broken down, if you wish to have it repaired I shall be glad to make a subscription.' The priest, much delighted, brought on tea, and was extremely deferential in his manner. When the subscription was put before him, the officer wrote in a bold hand the following characters, indicating that he belonged to the Yamèn of the Governor General (總督部院). Perceiving that his visitor was a high official in disguise, the priest filled with secret terror, fell upon his knees. The officer then added the following words (標下左營官兵), 'Military Officer of the Corps of the Left Division.' At this the priest, seeing his mistake, and that the stranger was a person of no great importance,

\* Reference has already been made to some Chinese theories of the pulse, theories which are fundamental in the practice of Chinese medicine. There is a story of a Chinese doctor who when strolling in the country, saw a field of growing wheat, and exclaimed: 'What fine looking garlic!' On overhearing this sage utterance a peasant remarked to his companion: 'What a wise man this city doctor must be!' He does not even distinguish *mai* (麥) wheat, from *mai* (脉) the pulse, or, as one might say in English, he does not even know the different kinds of *pulse*, peas, beans, etc., i.e., he 'does not know beans' when he sees them!



accordingly rose from his knees. As the officer wrote the words, 'Gladly subscribes Thirty'—the priest supposing that the subscription was to be Thirty Taels, was again pleased, and again dropped on his knees, when the military man completed the sentence by adding the word 'Cash.' Seeing that after all the subscription was but a trifle, the priest hastily arose, and turned away in anger and mortification.

Moral: 'Men honor the rich,—even dogs bite those with ragged clothes' (人敬富的, 狗咬破的). 'Money makes the courage of the brave; clothes are the covering which keeps others in awe' (錢是英雄的胆, 衣服是鎮人的毛). 'At a distance from home a man is judged by what he wears,—near home he is judged by what he is' (遠逛衣裳, 近逛人).

'A man is estimated by his clothes—and a horse by his saddle' (人是衣裳, 馬是鞍). 'Three-tenths according to a man's abilities; seven-tenths according to his costume' (三分的人才, 七分的打扮).

'Wealth rules the world; clothes make the age' (財帛世界, 衣帽年).

Transmigration as a Creditor's Father. A rich old man called to him several of his debtors, and said, 'If you will make oath that you are positively unable to pay me now, but will do so in the future life, I will burn the evidences of your indebtedness.' The first debtor, whose debts were small, took the oath that he was willing to become the creditor's Horse, to be ridden by him in the next world and thus he would pay off his score. The old man nodded assent, and burned the papers.

The next, whose debt was larger, said, 'I am ready to become in the next world your Ox, to plow and harrow your fields, and thus discharge my overdue debts.' The Creditor assented, and burned the documents, as before. Last came a man whose debts were very large, and who said, 'I am willing in the next world to be changed into your Father.' The old man was very angry, loaded him with reproaches, and was about to beat him, when the debtor cried, 'Listen to my defense. My debts are great, and cannot be repaid simply by my becoming your Horse, or your Ox. I am willing to become in the next life your Father, in order to toil for you a whole life-time, disregarding my own life, and if I can only accumulate great wealth for you I will keep nothing for myself. Is not this a suitable way in which to pay my long standing debts?'

Moral: Posterity will have pleasures of its own; why should one make a Horse or an Ox of himself for the sake of Posterity? (兒孫有了兒孫富, 不與兒孫做馬牛)

Burning Ants, and Worshipping Buddha. An old woman held in her hand a string of beads, and in a loud voice kept repeating the name of Amita Buddha, Amita Buddha, and in the midst of this pious service called out to her servant, 'This cooking boiler is overrun with ants, which are my abomination, bring me some fire and burn them up.' She then went on calling Amita Buddha, Amita Buddha, as before. After a time she called out to her servant again, 'Come and clean out the dirt from under the cooking range, but do not take my dust-pan lest it should be burned and spoiled, but go and borrow one of neighbor Chang.'

Moral: 'The mouth is right but the heart wrong' (口是心非). 'The mouth of the wicked is sweet, but the heart is bitter' (小人的嘴甜心苦). 'Those who can talk are not equal to those who can perform' (能說不如能作). 'Talking about Virtue is not so good as practicing it' (言善不如行善).

Counterparts of the following story are common in Western lands. Such cases indicate the touch of nature which makes the whole world kin.

Money More Valued than Life. A man having fallen into the water, his son begged another person to save his father, offering him a handsome reward. The drowning man contrived to get his head up long enough to cry, 'I will give you three (tael) cents, and no more. If you will not save me for that, you need not do it at all.'

Moral: Some regard money as much as they regard their lives (視錢如命), and will give up life, but not money (捨命不捨財). 'Men die for gain, birds perish to get food' (人爲財死, 鳥爲食亡).

The Monkey who Longed to be a Man. A Monkey having died, went to the realms of Yen Wang, the Chinese Pluto,\* and begged

\* The Chinese Pluto, so frequently referred to, is not one god but ten, spoken of collectively as 十殿閻君. The originals are affirmed to be ten potentates of the time of the Contending Kingdoms, selected for their well known ferocity and truculence, with a view to inspire dread of the judgment to be expected from them in a future life. They are accordingly represented with every variety of savage expression, reminding one of the observation of Mirabeau: "Few persons comprehend the power of my ugliness. If you would form an idea of my looks you must imagine a tiger who has had the small pox!"



to be transmigrated into human shape. Yen Wang informed the Monkey that in that case it would be necessary to have all the hairs on his body plucked out. Accordingly a small devil was summoned, who pulled out the first hair, but the Monkey complained of the pain, and begged to have no more taken out. Yen Wang laughed, and said, 'You are unwilling to have even one hair plucked, and how can you expect to become a Man?'

Moral: Nothing can be done in life without money, but he who has money, and is too parsimonious to spend it, is worthy only of contempt. He is like an earthenware cock, from which not a single feather can be plucked (磁公鷄一毛不拔), or like an iron donkey from which no hairs can be pulled (鐵驢子似的, 沒毛可拔).

'He who is unwilling to suffer trouble, will never attain to being a man above other men' (不受苦中苦, 難得人上人). 'He who does not experience persecution, will never become a Buddha' (不受磨難不成佛).

The Crow and Tortoise. A Crow standing on the bank of a wide river, fell into conversation with a Tortoise, and in a bantering way offered to test their comparative speed, by seeing which of them could reach most quickly the opposite shore. The Tortoise agreed, and dived at once to swim across. When the Crow had reached the other bank, he said, 'Tortoise, Tortoise.' 'Where are you?' 'Here I am,' said the Tortoise, putting up his head, 'I have been here a long time!' The Crow, much mortified to think that such a clumsy reptile had outstripped him, proposed another trial, to which the Tortoise willingly assented. This time the Crow flew with all his might, and was across in a twinkling, crying triumphantly, 'Tortoise! Tortoise! Where are you now?' 'Here I am,' said the Tortoise, 'I have been here a long time!' The Crow was now very unhappy indeed, but in sheer desperation proposed one more trial. The Crow now flew only to the middle of the river, and cried as before, 'Tortoise! Tortoise! Where are you?' 'Here I am,' said the Tortoise on the farther bank. 'Here I am,' said another Tortoise simultaneously from the bank which the Crow had just left.

Moral: Fraud can take unfair advantage of skill. 'One person cannot be wiser than two persons' (一人不過二人智).

Lung Wang Seeing the World. One day Lung Wang, the Dragon King, was disposed to leave his palace, which is deep under

the Sea, and go out and see the submarine world over which he ruled. His Ministers protested, but Lung Wang was resolute. Accordingly he transformed himself into a little fish, and went abroad, much delighted with the many strange things which he saw. But as his curiosity was much in excess of his experience, he was soon entangled in a fisherman's net, from which escape was impossible. He was taken out by the fisherman, sold in the market, bought by a housewife, who took him to her house, scraped him, split him in two, and fried him in a skillet before he had time to recover himself. As soon as he could disengage himself, he hastened to the palace of Yü Hwang, the chief ruler of the gods, to complain of his ill treatment. Yü Hwang inquired how Lung Wang came to be personating a little fish, and decided that as he had left his proper position for a sphere in which he had no business to be, he had only himself to thank for his misfortunes.

Moral: Let well enough alone. 'One may be a thousand days at home in comfort, but when he leaves home he is in constant trouble' (在家千日好, 出外時時難). 'The Phoenix is not so good at roosting as a chicken' (鳳凰落架不如雞). 'Do not enter a business which you do not understand, nor leave one with which you are familiar' (生行莫入熟行莫出). 'If you plunged into the net yourself, do not blame any one else' (自投羅網, 別怨人).

#### PROVERBS AS ILLUSTRATIONS OF HUMAN NATURE.

The proverbs of a nation afford an excellent index—as has been already remarked—of the national insight into human nature. Many sayings already cited illustrate this quality, which may, however, be further exemplified by a few additional instances.

'He who has just been put in charge of an Imperial Granary, sits up every night to boil for himself rice' (乍得倉官坐, 連夜煮米吃).

This is said in ridicule of those who, elevated to sudden wealth, know not how to behave. If they have dainty food its flavor is lost on them, if they wear elegant clothes they are not, after all, stylish (吃不得味兒, 穿不得樣兒).

In China the business of eating is conducted on the most rational principles. The Chinese—like the gods of Homer—are never in a hurry, and instead of bolting their food with Anglo-



Saxon precipitation, expend in its consumption an amount of time which, perhaps, helps to account for the surprising vitality of the race. 'Work' they wisely say, 'may be hastened, but not food' (緊活不緊飯).

No people appreciate more keenly than the Chinese 'The rare and ineffable pleasure of eating at somebody else's expense.'

It is on these happy occasions that they are said to 'stretch out a little hand in the throat' (嗓子裏伸出小手來).

It is in finding, and making, such opportunities that Chinese skill is shown. The capacity of taking in the situation, instant adaptation to the circumstances of the moment, is called *yen se* (眼色) or *yen li chien* (眼力見). Hence the significant saying, 'Exercise your faculty of seeing, and you will get good things to eat' (拿出眼力見來吃東西).

The employment of this variety of eyesight, often involves the display of what we vulgarly call 'brass,' but which in China is known as 'a thick face' (臉厚)—and an absence of shame. 'When the face is strong one eats long' (臉兒壯, 吃個胖).

'The man whose face is thick and tough  
At feasts will always get enough;  
But he whose face shall prove too thin,  
Can't even get his chop-sticks in.'

臉兒厚。吃個穀。臉兒薄。摸不着。

In the Confucian Analects (xv. 23), we are informed that Tzu Kung asked Confucius, whether there is any one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life. The Master said, "Is not Reciprocity (恕) such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

From the form of this expression many have inferred (and have even gone to the length of affirming in printed books) that, in China, the golden rule is only negative in its workings. It would be difficult to make a greater mistake. The Chinese have for ages been in the habit of doing to others almost exactly what they wish others to do to them. This proceeding is called 'propriety' (禮). Witness the dictum of the Book of Rites, 'Propriety is reciprocal; if there is giving, but no receiving, this is not propriety; if there is receiving, but no giving, neither is this propriety' (禮尚往來, 往而不來, 非禮也, 來而不往, 亦非禮也).

'When one goes abroad, he should treat each one as a guest and he should enter a room as if others were in it; if I wish men to honor me, it is only that I honor men' (出門如見賓, 入室如有人, 若要人重我, 無過我重人).

Reciprocity, in theory, signifies that one person honors some other person a linear (or other) foot, and this other person should in return honor him ten feet (你敬我一尺, 我敬你一丈). Reciprocity means giving a horse in return for an ox, and that a case of presents received is to be acknowledged by a case of presents in return (得人一牛, 還人一馬, 一盒子來, 必須一盒子去). Under the head of Poetry, the necessity of Reciprocity was made evident to the intelligent Reader, but here is a brief review lesson:—

有人倚。有人倚。無人倚。自跳起。  
跌倒了。自己爬。望人扶。都是假。

"If you have friends to lean upon, then friends indeed have you,  
But should you have no friends like this, then 'paddle your own canoe';  
Should you slip down, crawl up yourself, with all your might and main,  
The hope that other folks will help, is utterly in vain."

Reciprocity thus signifies that action and reaction are not only equal (as Western philosophers have taught), but a great deal more than equal. Practical Reciprocity is looking every man (or woman), not on his own things but also on the things of others, with a view to the transfer, if possible, of those things to his own use. In case of an emergency every man is ready to sacrifice the 'things of others' rather than his own, as Artemus Ward was prepared to prosecute the war though it involved sacrificing all his wife's relatives.

There is a story of an old Chinese woman who, when the country was threatened with grasshoppers, was heard praying against the impending calamity as follows:—

螞蚱神。螞蚱神。別吃咎的。吃四隣。

'Oh Locust god! Oh locust ruling powers!  
Eat all our neighbors crops, but don't touch ours.'

'When you meet a man lessen his age; when you come across an article enhance its value' (逢人損壽, 遇物增價). This is the shrewd dictum of the Chinese Lord (Chesterfield) who knows what will please others. If your friend is obviously forty years old,



salute him by observing that he looks barely thirty; if he has bought an inferior curio for twice its value do not undeceive him but tell him that it would have been cheap at any price, as there are but few specimens of the kind extant.

'In eating other people's food, one eats until the perspiration flows, in eating one's own, one eats, and the tears come' (吃人家的, 吃出汗來, 吃自己的, 吃出淚來). Like our "Broad thongs are cut out of other folk's leather."

'You are a red-mouth and white-teeth, eating other people's food not knowing how to behave' (你是紅口白牙, 吃人的東西, 不知情). This means that when there is any chance to eat at the expense of others, the mouth is always open, and the teeth always in sight.

'No Work are two Fairies' (無事是二神仙). The Chinese dictum corresponds to the observation in the 'Essays of Elia:' "A man can never have too much Time to himself, nor too little to do. Had I a little son, I would Christen him NOTHING TO DO; he should do nothing. Man, I verily believe, is out of his element as long as he is operative." To the same effect is the saying: 'To be entirely at leisure for one day is to be for one day an Immortal' (一日清閒, 一日仙).

'Never ask a guest whether you shall kill your chicken' (你不可殺雞問客). If you first inquire whether he would like to have it cooked on his account, the guest must of course decline. This will make the guest uncomfortable, and the host ridiculous.

'Determined to eat copperas\* so as to poison a tiger' (吃紅礬藥死老虎的主意). Of one who is so resolved to injure another, that he is willing to sacrifice his own life to accomplish it, as when suicide is committed on the premises of an enemy in order to involve him in a ruinous lawsuit.

'Every family has a goddess of Mercy; every place has Amita Buddha' (家家觀世音, 處處彌陀佛).

'Every family has a book that is hard to read' (家家有本難念的書). There is a skeleton in every house.

\* Chinese classifications are seldom satisfactory ones. Of three 'deadly drug's' mentioned in one of their proverbs, two are much less dangerous than others in common use; 'Sulphur, croton-oil seeds, and arsenic; he who takes them, will speedily attend a funeral' (硫磺, 巴豆, 信, 吃了就出殯).

'Even an upright magistrate can hardly decide family disputes' (清官難斷家務事).

'When a daughter has grown up, she is like smuggled salt' (閨女大了似私鹽包). The only security is to see her safely married as early as possible.

'The most virtuous damsel should beware of the plotting youth' (烈女怕謀郎).

'Of the hundred Virtues filial conduct is the chief, but it must be judged by the intentions and not by acts, for judged by acts there would not be a filial son in the world. Of the myriad Vices, lust is the worst; but it must be determined by deeds and not by inclinations, since determined by inclinations there would not be a perfect man in the world.'

百行孝爲先。論心不論事。論事世間無孝子。  
萬惡淫爲首。論事不論心。論心天下無完人。

'A woman who acts the falcon, does it in furthering a plot in which two persons are involved' (放鷹的婦人, 是兩口子的計策). When a husband and wife find it impossible to get enough to eat at home, they sometimes go out to 'hawk' (放鷹), at a great distance from home, where they are quite unknown. The woman then becomes the man's 'sister,' and is eligible for marriage on moderate terms. She is no sooner established in her new home, than she takes occasion to elope, carrying with her as many of the valuables of her new husband as she can lay her hands upon, rejoining her real husband at some place agreed upon.

This trade is rendered comparatively easy from the circumstance that the Chinese are in the habit of remarrying promptly, when a partner is lost.

'A wife is like a wall of mud-bricks, take off one row, and there is another below it' (妻似牆上的坯, 揭一層又一層) which signifies that the wife is no sooner dead than her husband begins to plan for securing another. 'The widow does not stay so for more than a month, and the widower fills the hole in his house (takes a new wife) within a year' (寡婦不隔月, 填房不過年).

The perpetual brawls and lawsuits which are sure to result, have indeed rendered it proverbial that 'a prudent man will not take a woman whose husband is living' (好漢子, 不娶活人妻),



but in the case of the 'hawking' wife the cheapness tempts the purchaser, who soon finds, however, that 'He who grasps at a small advantage, incurs a great loss' (佔小便宜吃大虧). (貪小利必受大害), and that 'When the gains are great the loss is correspondingly heavy' (利也大害也大), for 'Great strokes of luck, have always been found to be cheats' (從來便宜是個當), i.e., like articles given in pawn (上當).

'Even the best of men, cannot stand a leak underneath' (是個好漢子, 也架不了底漏). The significant phrase 'bottom leak' (底漏) is employed to denote women who steal from the family of the mother-in-law, to give to the mother's family. This petty pilfering is a familiar experience in Chinese households. 'Outside thieves are easily withstood; against thieves in the family, it is hard to watch against' (外賊好擋, 家賊難防).

There is a story of two old dames who had not seen each other for many a long year, and who one day met. 'How do things go?' said one to the other, 'How is your son's business, and what kind of a daughter-in-law have you?' To this the answer was, 'My son's business is fairly good, but the daughter-in-law is bad—she steals from us for her mother' (底漏). 'And your married daughter, what about her?' 'Ah!' was the reply, 'If it had not been for the help I got from that daughter, we should not have been able to get on at all!'

'There is no dipper which never strikes the edge of the cooking boiler' (沒有馬勺不碰鍋簷的).

The ladle (馬勺) is made of brass, and in dipping out the food, it is certain now and then to hit the iron kettle. This is used to indicate that there is no family ideally harmonious, for there are sure to be little domestic 'unpleasantnesses,' as unpremeditated and as inevitable as the collision between dipper and kettle.

'Nobody's family can hang up the sign, Nothing the matter here' (誰家不能掛着無事牌). The expression *wu shih p'ai* refers to a practice among the Secret Sects when an outbreak is planned, of hanging a little sign-board (*p'ai*) by the door, with a secret formula, which protects the building from plunder, and is thus styled a 'Notice that all is well.' The meaning is similar to the last saying quoted. Every family has its troubles. There are none so fortunate as never to be obliged to ask favors (沒有不求人的人).

## ABUSIVE LANGUAGE.

Attention has been repeatedly called to the constant Chinese habit of using language intended to be indirectly abusive of another. Examples of this have already been given incidentally, in treating of other aspects of proverbs. A few additional specimens will illustrate the facility with which such modes of speech are invented.

The command of a vocabulary of abuse is apparently universal in China, as well among women and children as among men. Children are often taught it assiduously as soon as they can talk, that their elders may be amused by the strange contrast between the infantile innocence of the speaker, and the vileness and virulence of its language. The result is that every one can hold his own in a reviling match, which is the form which many Chinese quarrels assume. 'In reviling,' says the proverb, 'it is not necessary to prepare a preliminary draft' (罵人不用打草稿).

Among a people who are universal revilers it might be expected that abusive language would pass comparatively unnoticed being too common to attract attention. But if used otherwise than as a playful banter, the person toward whom it is directed is obliged to take notice of it, otherwise he 'loses face.' An attack of this sort is like 'check' in chess, the player must either take a new position, capture his adversary, or interpose something between his adversary and himself. The latter is the most common mode of adjustment, that through 'peace-talkers,' which ends in a grand feast of native reconciliation, or failing that, in an irreparable breach. This simple theory of reviling, and its orthodox treatment, contains an explanation of the inception of thousands of lawsuits and millions of fights.

A characteristic aspect of Chinese human nature, is presented in the saying: 'Strike a man's head, but do not strike him in the face; when you revile a man, do not attack his character' (打人別打臉, 罵人別揭短). The explanation of this somewhat singular direction, is that a man's skull can be hammered for a long time, and with considerable violence, yet without much apparent damage and without causing great loss of blood; whereas if his face were battered, and if he should go to the magistrate with a complaint, he would have a strong case against the assailant. In like manner one may go great lengths in reviling, but should he 'twit on



facts to too great an extent, his enemy will be so exasperated as to make serious trouble!

It is said in contempt of one who has been reviled, but who has made no defense, that he feels no pain—he has grown used to it (作事挨罵不覺疼). By the time a man is old, it is supposed that he is entitled to comparative immunity from the reviling to which, at frequent intervals, he has been subjected, and even the magistrates, who are in the habit of black-guarding those who are brought before them, respect great age, and do not beat men seventy years old, nor revile those who are eighty, as witnesseth the proverb (七十不打八十不罵).

Owing to the fixity of Chinese residence, those who have become bitter enemies, reviling each other at sight, are still neighbors as before, just as a daughter, though often beaten, is still an own daughter (打不斷的兒女親, 罵不開的近街隣). This saying is employed to urge to kind treatment of children, and to forbearance toward neighbors.

The use of abusive language is nowhere carried to a higher pitch than among the boating population, who are often crowded together in narrow water ways, where, under the most favorable circumstances, it would be difficult to keep the peace. When a boat is once in motion, no one will give way to any one else. In case of collision, or obstruction, each boatman roars and reviles at the top of his voice. But when the boats are again at anchor, the respective crews fall to chatting and laughing, as if nothing had happened (行船打罵, 住船說話). This saying is used to show that there should be no chronic quarrels.

One method of oblique vilification consists in intimating that the person reviled does not deserve to be called a man. The phrase *wan pu shih jen* (萬不是人), is the object of allusion in the saying, 'He is merely the *wan* character' (萬字打頭), i.e., the character *wan* represents the whole phrase, and the meaning is that the person indicated is in no sense and in no degree a man.

So also, as in examples already given, a person is likened to a mud image. 'An image of a hare with a beard attached,—vain pretence of being an old man' (兔搗碓帶鬚子, 竟充老人).

The *tu tao tui* is a toy popular at the harvest festival on the fifteenth of the eighth moon, having the head of a hare, and provided with a string which beats a little drum to represent the sound of

grain beaten in a pestle (碓). This expression is used in ridicule of a young bully, who likes to use lofty language, suitable only for a person belonging to an older generation.

So also: 'The-can't-upset wearing a beard,—vain pretense of being a relative of the family' (搬不倒帶鬍子, 湊充老家親).

'The-can't-upset sitting on an abacus,—a little fellow that muddles the accounts' (搬不倒坐在算盤上, 是個混賬小子). The phrase *hun chang* (混賬) as an epithet of abuse, has been already explained.

'Sticking a black bean on a wisp of straw, and calling it a man' (草把子安黑豆, 也算個人). That is, he is not fit to be called a man.

From the implication that one is *not* a man, it is but a step to the suggestion that he *is* an animal, as in the saying: 'This herd of Frogs, Rats,\* Hedgehogs, and Oxen' (這羣蛤蟆, 老鼠, 刺蝟, 牛的) implying that they are all beasts and reptiles—not men.

Although the Chinese do not ordinarily call an opponent a Donkey,† as has for ages been the custom in Occidental lands, they employ the name of this animal in an unfavorable sense: 'Taking my good heart for a donkey's liver and lungs' (拿着我的好心, 當了驢肝肺).

In the following saying, the donkey stands for an ugly man married to a beautiful woman: 'A bunch of fresh flowers stuck on a donkey's head' (一朵鮮花插在驢頭上).

In a country where 'the chief end of man' is to leave posterity, to point out that one has no children is considered not only in bad taste, but actually abusive. 'A fallen tree that casts no shade; a battle array which destroys all the enemy' (樹倒無陰, 絕戶陣).

The *chüeh hu chen* (絕戶陣) is a triumph of ancient military tactics by which the adversary is beguiled into a certain position,

\* In the following saying the double name of the Rat, *lao shu* (老鼠) or *hao tzu* (耗子) 'waster,' gives occasion for an abusive pun: 'You are a rat brought on a cloud, a heaven-made waster' (你乃雲端的老鼠, 天生的个耗兒), where the words *hao erh* (耗兒) are intended to apply to a young spend-thrift—'You are fated by heaven to be a prodigal.'

† The Buddhist Priests, as already mentioned, are called 'Bald Donkeys,' by a Pun on their sacred appellation (鬍黎). As the doctrine of the transmigration of souls is a Buddhist one, it is but natural that the popular view should be that at death, Buddhist Priests *become donkeys*, which is the implication in the following proverb: 'Once a Priest, then going back to the world—he does not care whether or not he turns into a donkey' (當了和尚, 又還俗, 不管變驢不變驢).



and then exterminated. A man who has no sons, is called a *chüeh ku*; a road which leads nowhere (or which, like the trail mentioned in 'Hyperion,' 'ends in a squirrel-track up a tree') is known as a *chüeh hu lu* (絕戶路).

Another style of abuse intimates that one is a bad character. 'A countenance combining a hare's head and a snake's eyes' (兔頭蛇眼的像貌).

'He has the head and front of a grave plunderer and a coffin robber' (長了个偷棺掘墓的腦袋).

Grave robbery is punished with summary decapitation. This signifies that the man is what we should call a 'jail-bird.' 'A poor god, a ruined temple, and a stinking thief for a priest' (窮神破廟, 臭賊老道). This is a collective vilification of a number of persons, signifying that they are at once poor and vicious.

The phrase *je chüeh* (熱決), 'instant extermination,' is employed as a synonym for the punishment of decapitation. It denotes that one ought to be beheaded. 'He has a head fit for execution' (長了个熱決的首級).

One who has money at his command, and on this account boasts over others, is reviled by the inquiry, 'Since you have money, why do you not go and pay to have your head cut off?' (你有錢, 何不捐个熱決).

The character *tan* 蛋\* signifying an egg, is also defined as the name of a tribe of aborigines. It is a term of universal application in abusive language, as in English a person is sometimes colloquially spoken of as 'a bad egg.' Yet it may also be employed in a good sense, as when the solitary child of his father's old age, is spoken of as a 'phoenix egg' (這是個鳳凰蛋).

'In a kettle containing thick porridge, to add rice-flour balls,—glutinous eggs' (黏粥鍋裏下元宵, 糊塗蛋). The first moon of the new year gives its name to these balls (元宵) which are at that time in great demand. They are made of glutinous rice (江米) and are also known as *t'ang yüan* (湯元).

'Hail at the Five Terraced Mountains—dark eggs' (五臺山下雹子, 陰蛋). The Wu Tai mountains, in northern Shansi, are under the influence of the inferior, or *yin* (陰) principle. The saying may be used to indicate that one is both morose and vicious.

\* This character has a bad flavor in the following sentences, and is used in low reviling. It is well enough to know it, and still better to avoid it.

‘Wrapped up in a bag,—a good for nothing egg’ (窩囊包廢物蛋).

The phrase *wo nang* (窩囊 or 臥囊) has been already explained. The expression *wo nang pao* is used of one much abused, but not daring to make a disturbance, or not knowing how to carry it through, and who therefore is compelled to smother his wrath (生悶氣). The words ‘useless egg,’ imply that one is universally incapable.

‘The *ovum* of a duck suspended between the heavens, and the earth,—a hanging egg’ (半空中掛鴨卵懸蛋.) This is a pun, in which the character *hsuan* (懸) to suspend, is employed to suggest *hsüan* (誑) false, meaning, ‘he is a lying egg.’

The same idea is expressed by the phrase: ‘A chicken’s egg hanging in a spider’s web’ (蜘蛛網上吊雞子兒, 是個懸蛋).

‘The water in a tea-shop,—boiling.’ (茶鋪子水, 滾開). The character *kun* (滾) is applied both to the bubbling of water as it boils, and to rotary motions in general. The meaning—as in the next two examples,—is ‘Roll out of here!’ ‘Be off with you!’

‘The son of a tumble-bug, a rolling egg’ (屎蜋郎生子, 滾蛋). ‘Pull up the door-sill and roll out!’ (拔開門檻子, 滾出去).

‘To spend money and become a turbid egg’ (拿錢捐渾蛋). ‘To put iron balls into flour soup,—an opaque egg that drops to the bottom’ (麪茶鍋裏下鐵毬, 渾蛋到底了). This denotes that the person to whom it is applied, is hopelessly bad all the way through from top to bottom.

‘An old-age-peach dropped into flour soup,—an opaque egg coming to a point’ (麪茶鍋裏下壽桃, 渾蛋出了尖). As the flour dumpling shaped like a peach, differs from an egg in having a sharp point at one end (出了尖), so this classic specimen of the bad egg species surpasses all others (渾的出衆).

The phrase *chia chi* (加級), is used in proclamations, etc., after a list of titles, to indicate the number of promotions through which an official has passed, as *chia pa chi* (加八級), promoted eight steps. This expression is made to do duty in reviling another, in the saying: ‘A bad egg promoted eight steps’ (渾蛋加八級).

The irresistible tendency of the Chinese toward the use of reviling language, is well expressed in a saying touching one who has been drinking too much wine, and who is resolved to find some one to abuse. He is not so far gone, however, as not to be half



conscious that promiscuous reviling will not be safe; he therefore confines himself to black-guarding *The man that rears a pale-blue dog!* (酒後，罵養月白狗的). The proverb is used of one who wishes to appear very angry, finding fault with everybody and everything; but who dares not take the responsibility of his words. The incessant stream of reviling language, which is sure to be set aflow by a Chinese quarrel, is described in the saying: 'A sound like the parching of beans,—reviling without cessation' (似爆豆兒一般的，罵不住口).

## PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

The proverbial philosophy of the Chinese in regard to children deserves a little attention, not only because it is considered essential for every one to leave behind him posterity to keep up the family, and to worship at the graves, but also because of peculiar modes of expression from which it might be inferred that children are by no means considered an unmingled blessing.

'It is of no consequence,' says the proverb, 'that children are born late in one's life; what is to be feared is that fate should decree them a short life' (不怕兒女晚，只怕壽數短).

'If one's destiny is to have sons, what signifies early or late, provided they do but live?' (命中有兒，何在早晚，只要活着).

Yet another proverb says, 'Sons should be born early, not late' (能生早子，不養遲兒). This maxim like many other Chinese sayings, is the expression of pure selfishness. If sons are born early, they may be expected to grow to maturity, and wait upon their parents for many years, while they are still alive. If otherwise, there is danger that the parents may die before their sons are of sufficient age to render much service, and thus the trouble expended upon the children will have been wasted!

That a nation so firmly persuaded that everything in life is fated, should be strongly impressed with the influence of Fate on one's children, is a matter of course. 'Wealth and children have each a fixed fate' (財帛兒女由天分).

'Wealth and children are alike subject to Fate' (財帛兒女命相連).

'Riches, sons and daughters are fixed by Destiny' (財帛兒女有定分), and this is indirectly assumed in such expressions as the following, 'His virtue has been cultivated to the extent of five sons

and two daughters' (修的五男,二女的). On the other hand a vicious child is a punishment inflicted in the present life (這小子是个現世報).

The absolute necessity of having children in the family—one's own, or adopted—is a postulate of Chinese social ethics, for otherwise there will be no one to keep up the sacrifices to ancestors. 'There are three things' said Mencius, 'which are unfilial, and to have no posterity is the greatest of them' (不孝有三,無後爲大).

But in connection with this tenet, it is essential to take cognizance of the most prominent social fact in China, to wit, the 'struggle for existence.' The tremendous pressure of this mighty force is everywhere felt. 'A child but a foot long, requires three feet of cloth' (一尺的孩子,三尺布).

But a child, no matter what its linear measurement, requires, even in China, very much more than a yard of cloth. As a rule, the countless millions of this teeming Empire appear always to have spent the main part of the first three years of their lives in somebody's arms, for Confucius assigns this as the singular reason for observing a period of three years' mourning for parents. In China the phrase 'infant in arms' (懷抱的孩子) has an appalling significance, to which Occidental lands can probably furnish few parallels.

During all the time that children are 'in arms,' the treadmill of absolutely necessary work is interrupted, and with this interruption, the small, but indispensable family income, diminishes or disappears. Thus it is easy to understand how 'A poor family rearing a child, is oppressed by poverty for three years' (小戶人家養个孩子,受三年窮).

It is due to this grinding experience, as well as to the terrible uncertainty how one's children will 'turn out' (by which is intended as much their external success in life, as their moral character), that they are so often described by the strange expression: '*Yüan chia*' (冤家), 'foes' or 'oppressors of the family.' 'Many sons and many daughters, many family foes; no sons and no daughters, a living *P'u Sa*' (多兒多女多冤家,沒兒沒女活菩薩).\*

If one is fated to have many children, he comforts himself with the aphoristic reflection, 'If there are many, we can manage to rake

\* These characters are often given 活神仙, referring, like the other phrase, to freedom from care and anxiety; Mr. Scarborough in No. 2170 translates this phrase 'a family of fairies.'



up a little more profit' (多了可以多撈摸), a proverb which encourages to try his luck again in gambling, trading, or any other doubtful venture.

'A son successfully reared is a real son, otherwise he is a trouble to the family' (養着是兒, 養不着是冤家).

Expressions of this sort, are to be interpreted by the same kind of triangular exegesis of which a specimen has already been given, explaining the force of three characters all pronounced *tu* (妒) as applied to women. Here, in like manner, we have three *yuan* characters; when the father is unkind and the son unfilial, this is the *yuan* (冤), meaning wrong, and injustice; when the father and son are inharmonious, this is *yuan* (怨), meaning resentment. But when the father is truly paternal, and the son really filial, this is *yuan* (緣), fate. Ordinary language, however, takes very little notice of these subtleties.

These painful uncertainties attendant on the wholesale rearing of children, give rise to the proverbial warnings against having too many of them. 'One son and one daughter, one flowerstalk; many sons and many daughters, many family-wrongs' (一兒一女一枝花, 多兒多女多冤家).

'If you rear sons do not rear two,—if you rear two you will be like *Ling Kuan* horses; if you rear sons do not rear three,—if you rear three, you will have no home at all' (養兒別養倆, 養倆靈官馬, 養兒別養三, 養三沒有家). This proverb is based upon the understanding that the final object of having children is to benefit the parents. When, for example, the mother has grown old, and is obliged to live with her children, if there are two she will be made to go from one to another, and have no rest. *Ling Kuan* (靈官) is said to be the title of a deified Chou Dynasty officer named *Wang*, who was always on a detail to subjugate some kingdom in the extreme west, or to tranquilize some region in the remote east. Thus his horses' hoofs never had any rest (馬不停蹄). A mother who lives with two sons, may expect a similar experience, but if she have three, 'It will be still worse, for then she will never be at home anywhere.' In a word 'He who has many sons, will have many fears' (多男則多懼).

So that, after all, on every ground, 'If one's sons are only dutiful, there is no need of wishing for many, one such is equal to ten,—i.e., of the ordinary kind (好子不用多, 一個頂十個).

The parental love for children, even at their worst, is indicated in the expression, 'Pleasure-going troubles' (喜歡的冤家). So also, 'Children are visible joys' (兒女乃是眼前歡兒).

'Even a skillful housewife cannot manage four children' (好老婆, 架不住四个孩子). This saying is one of those touches of nature which show that the whole world is kin. What with cooking, mending, and the general management of domestic affairs, the most expert administrator must soon reach the limit of her powers.

The relative advantages of sons and daughters are emphatically indicated in the saying, 'Eighteen Lohan-daughters are not equal to a boy with a limp' (十八个羅漢女, 趕不上个點腳的兒). By the expression 'Eighteen Lohan-daughters,' is intended girls who in beauty, etc., are as much models in their way as the eighteen 'Companions of Buddha' were in theirs. It is to be gathered from this that the best girls are not equal to the worst boys. Yet if boys are not to be had, still, girls are better than nothing! 'If one cannot get any mercury, red earth becomes valuable' (沒有礞砂, 紅土子爲貴).

In the selfish nature of the relations between Chinese parents and their children is to be found an explanation of the otherwise inexplicable dislike of daughters. 'Men rear sons,' says one of their proverbs, 'to provide for old age; they plant trees, because they want the shade' (養兒防備老, 種樹圖陰涼). But this holds true of sons only, not of daughters. By the time a girl would begin to repay the trouble expended in rearing her, she is betrothed and becomes an additional burden. Her wedding is a drain on the family resources, for which there is no compensation. After her marriage she is the exclusive property of the husband's family, and as beyond control of her parents, as water which has burst its banks. (嫁出的姑娘, 沖出去的水)

When she comes for more or less frequent visits to her own home, she is generally at work for herself, for her husband or for their children (none of whom are any part of her parent's family), and when she returns to her mother-in-law, it must be with a present from her own family.

If her mother is old, helpless, and widowed, the daughter cannot care for her. 'Wild grain does not go for grain taxes, a daughter does not support her mother.' (穰子不納糧, 閨女不



養娘). Upon these terms, it is not, perhaps, surprising that when daughters are most enthusiastically welcomed at their birth, it is with the philosophic reflection, 'Girls too are necessary!'

Such being the Chinese social philosophy in reference to children, it is not surprising to hear that the duties of parents are exhausted when they have seen their offspring married. The obligation to achieve this, is recognized as being most imperative, and second to none other: 'To marry boys and wed girls, this is the great rite of chief importance; how can parents refuse to perform this duty?' (男婚女配, 大禮攸關, 父母焉能辭其責).

'Daughters must not be kept at home unmarried; if they are forcibly kept in this condition, it is sure to breed enmity' (女大不可留, 強留必定仇).

'When sons are paired, and daughters mated, the principal business of life is accomplished' (兒成雙女成對, 一生大事已完). This done, parents can then proceed to 'die without remorse!'

One of the very few current aphorisms which suggests any duties at all on the part of parents towards children, bases the demand for kind treatment on the fact that extreme severity will prevent the children from being filial, in which case the parents may have all their trouble for nothing.

'If the father and mother are not lenient, it will be difficult to bring about a filial course on the part of children' (父母不見寬, 難顯兒女的孝道來).

The same reasoning is applied to the behavior of the Prince toward his people, and with a similar motive. 'If the Prince is not upright, the ministers are sure not to be loyal; if the father is not compassionate, the son is certain not to be filial' (君不正臣必不忠, 父不慈子定不孝).

Selfishness is therefore at the bottom of this virtue. Such being the inherent difficulties, only those can crow who have achieved success: 'He who has no father and mother, can boast of his filial behavior; those who have no children boast of their neatness' (沒老子娘誇孝順, 沒兒女誇乾淨).

It is of course easy to affirm in the language of the opening sentence of the Trimetrical Classic, that 'all mankind at their origin have a nature which is originally good' (人之初, 性本善), and that 'The heart of a child is like the heart of Buddha' (小兒

的心, 似佛心). And when the facts recorded by observation and experience cannot readily be harmonized with this generalization, it is equally easy to argue, as is often done when dissuading from punishing a child: 'When the tree has grown large it will straighten itself' (樹若大了, 自然直), (or more briefly 樹大自直). In practice, however, the method of treating a child born obstreperous—in defiance of the Trimetrical Classic—is to let him alone, and hope for the best. To this effect is the following saying, 'A violent boy will turn out well; a turbulent girl is sure to be skillful' (利害小兒是个好的, 利害閨女是个巧的).

The course of things when any one really undertakes any discipline of children, is well expressed in the proverb, 'Domestic chickens only fly round and round, wild chickens fly into the skies' (家鷄打的團團轉, 野鷄打的滿天飛), i.e., one's own children cannot get away—those of others run home.

The common view that every one else's children come to something, with an implication that one's own do not, is conveyed in the saying: 'Other people who rear children see them succeed' (人家養兒養女, 要往上長). The inference is, mine do not,—often said in mere politeness.

The excessive and blind love (溺愛) for children which can refuse them nothing, is satirized by impartial observers in the following saying: 'If he calls for a man's brains, then hold the man down and knock out the brains!' (要活人的腦漿子, 按倒就砸).

Parents who are irrationally anxious about their children, and always guarding them with superabundant care, are ridiculed in the following saying: 'Hold him in your mouth, for fear he should melt, carry him on your head for fear he will not be straight' (口裏含着怕化了, 腦袋頂着怕歪了).

It is a common jest on a rainy day, when one's ordinary occupation is interrupted: 'A cloudy day,—leisure to beat the children' (陰天打孩子, 閑着的工夫).

The Chinese view of the parental relation is in some aspects a highly practical one, as the sayings already cited show. It is in this view that we are told: 'A whole house-full of sons and daughters is not after all equal even to a second wife' (滿堂的兒女, 不如半路的夫妻). The children, that is to say, escape, and have other concerns elsewhere, while one's wife is always at hand.



The love of parents to children is alluded to in many sayings: The tiger, though fierce, does not devour its cubs' (虎毒不吃子).

'Cats love their kittens, and dogs their pups, if they are not one's own, one does not care for them' (貓養的貓疼, 狗養的狗疼, 不養的不疼).

'What fasten to the heart's strings, and pull on the liver, are one's sons and daughters' (連心扯胆的是兒女).

'Seven bowels, and eight bowels full of posterity' (七股子腸子八股子葉). 'Seven' and 'eight' are numbers not very distant from *ten* which signifies completeness. The meaning is that the greater part of one's existence is for posterity, that is for one's children, and there is a covert implication that posterity is a nuisance, and only a visitation for the parents' sins. The character *yeh* (葉) is intended to suggest another character *yeh* (孽) (or *nieh*) meaning the retribution *q.d.* children are a visitation of Heaven to punish the parents' sin (罪孽).

The Chinese are far too good observers of human nature, not to have discovered that the love of parents for children—especially the mother-love which knows no oblivion, and is irrespective of time—is of a totally different quality from the love of children for parents, which under no circumstances can be expected to stretch its mourning *beyond* the three years fixed by immemorial custom. Hence the saying: 'There are only affectionate fathers and mothers, but no affectionate sons and daughters' (只有慈心的父母, 沒有慈心的兒女).

In the following saying the object is to emphasize the excellence of the parental, as compared with other human relationships. 'There are in the world no parents who are not good, and the most difficult thing in life is to secure brothers' (天下無不是的父母, 世上難得的是弟兄).

'A father and mother can do without their children, but children cannot do without their father and mother' (能叫父母缺兒女, 不叫兒女缺爹娘).

'One may give up a father though he be a magistrate, but not a mother though she be a beggar' (能捨坐官的爹, 不捨叫花子的娘).

In regard to this giving up one's parents, the Chinese have many jests. The business of raising fruit is said to be a very lucrative one. An orchard is colloquially termed 'a row' (行子), and

the phrase 'row of things hanging from the branches' (吊枝行) indicates both an orchard and also denotes the business of dealing in fresh fruit. Hence the saying: 'One can give up his old father and mother [as he does not make anything out of them] but not a fruit orchard' (能捨老子娘, 不捨吊枝行).

It is proverbial that the daintiest fish in rivers are the carp (鯉), and in the sea the *so* (鮫), (河中鯉, 海中鮫, 最肥不過). Hence the saying, 'One can surrender his own mother, but he could not give up sauce made from the *so* fish' (捨却老親娘, 難捨鮫魚湯).

The doctrine of Filial Piety upon which the Chinese lay so much stress, is, as has been often pointed out, so entirely defective in enforcing the duties of parents to children, that we here find one of the weakest spots in the Chinese social system.

#### PROVERBS RELATING TO CHINESE SUPERSTITIONS.

The current superstitions of a people like the Chinese, are sure to be reflected in their proverbial sayings. The popular ideas in regard to those who are physically deformed in any way, have been already noticed. Many other notions, far more unaccountable, are universally and firmly believed. Such, for example, is the tenet that large ears are a token of great good fortune, and should they be long enough to depend upon the shoulders their happy owner would reach the highest pitch of felicity. This opinion is an article of solemn faith with nearly all Chinese. It gives occasion, however, for bantering sayings aimed at those who have some specially prominent characteristic—Thus:

'When the head is big one's luck is great, for happiness hangs from the skin of the pate' (頭大福也大, 有福在頭皮上掛).

'Your mouth is big, that's luck for you, for happiness hangs from its corners two' (嘴大福也大, 有福在嘴角兒上掛).

'Big feet, great luck; we all suppose felicity hangs from the tips of the toes' (腳大福也大, 有福在腳尖兒上掛).

But while elephantine ears—like those of *Liu Pei*, which depended to his shoulders, giving him such an amount of good fortune that he was enabled to found a dynasty,\*—are of great importance, they should not stand out from the head, as if flapping

\* To *Liu Pei* the current saying is especially applicable, 'Both ears hanging to the shoulders,—a most illustrious man' (兩耳垂肩大貴人).



in the wind like the wings of a bird, for he who has such appendages, is sure to be the evil genius of his family (兩耳搨風, 敗家的妖精).

Another superstition of the Chinese is connected with the raphis or groove in the middle of the upper lip. If it is long the owner is certain to be long-lived, and not only so, but his age will be in the direct ratio of the length of this little channel (called 人中).

In illustration of this tenet it is related that the Emperor Han Wu Ti (漢武帝), in conversation with Tung Fang So (東方朔), observed: "I have read in the books on physiognomy (相書) that if the *jen chung* is an inch long, the man will live an hundred years; now mine is an inch and two-tenths, so that I shall certainly live to be more than a century old." Upon this Tung Fang burst into so immoderate and uncontrollable a fit of laughter as to surprise and offend His Majesty, who demanded what he meant. "I was not laughing at Your Majesty," was the reply, "but at the idea of old P'eng (老彭) of the Shang Dynasty, who lived 880 years, for the groove in his lip must have reached from the top of his head to his chin!" Thereafter Wu Ti no longer believed in physiognomy.

The Chinese books on physiognomy give rules for the determination of every doubtful point, with extreme minuteness, and the dicta of these works have attained a currency to which Lavater never aspired.

The following rules by which to measure beauty, are widely current, and implicitly accepted. For Men: 'Clear eyebrows, comely eyes; a square face and large ears; a straight nose and broad mouth; a face which looks as if it had been powdered; and lips which seem to have been rubbed with vermilion' (眉清目秀, 方面大耳, 鼻直口闊, 面如敷粉, 唇若塗硃). For Women: 'Eyebrows like the leaf of the willow; eyes like the kernel of the apricot; a mouth like a cherry; a face shaped like a melon seed; a waist like the poplar and the willow' (柳葉眉, 杏核眼, 櫻桃口, 瓜子臉, 楊柳腰). A woman's face ought to be oval, wide at the top and narrow at the bottom, like a water-melon seed. If these proportions are reversed, the result is most unpleasing. She should sway gently in her walk like the poplar and the willow in the wind (風吹楊柳細而擺).

'A twitching of the left eye denotes wealth; that of the right eye signifies calamity' (左眼跳財, 右眼跳禍).

'When the tops of the ears of an old person hang down, and are dry, he must be destined soon to enter his coffin' (老人耳垂子乾, 必定要入棺).

'If the space behind the ear is not large enough for a finger, though he be eighty years old, yet he will not die' (耳後不容指, 八十不能死).

'A man with round shoulders and a stooping back, will suffer bitterness all his life' (弓肩縮背, 一世苦累).

'He whose steps resound like the beating of a drum, will be always poor' (脚擂鼓, 一世苦).

'Small hands and large feet, a life of wretchedness' (小手大脚, 一輩子糟糕).

'If the forefinger twitches, one is sure to have plenty to eat' (食指動, 必有嘴頭吃).

'If a boy is born with fingers like a girl's, he will have a living without effort' (男生女手, 不賺自有). This is a dictum of the books on physiognomy (相書) and is regarded as indubitable. The fingers in question are both tapering and supple.

'If a girl is born with a masculine countenance, her dignity will be beyond all account.' (女生男相, 貴不可諒).

In English we often hear the reply, when one observes that his ears burn, 'some one is talking about you.' A similar notion prevails among the Chinese: 'Eyes that twitch, eyebrows grown long; somebody's telling what you've done wrong' (眼跳眉毛長, 必定有人講).\*

In the same manner if one sneezes repeatedly, it is a sign that others are using his name.

That the hair turns white while its owner is still young, argues to the Chinese apprehension superior capacities. Hence the proverb:

\* An expression involving a play upon the *chiang* (講) character, may be instanced as an example of the facility with which puns are lost sight of. The boundaries of farming land, it should be premised, in a country where fences are unknown, and in regions where stone posts are unattainable, are marked by little bushes of various kinds of plants, generally selected for their vitality. The phrase *sang k'o* (桑棵), has come to be a generic name for 'boundary bush,' and to say that one has 'cultivated beyond the boundary bush' (講桑棵以外) means that he encroaches upon the rights of others. A speaker who wished to make it clear that none of his hearers understood the causes of rain-fall, observed: 'You could not explain it, or if you did you would explain it beyond the *sang bush*, i.e., they would get off upon a territory that did not belong to them: (你講不了, 若是講了, 必講桑棵以外, *q.d.*, 講桑棵以外), 'cultivate beyond your own boundary.' The manner in which such phrases are spoken and heard often shows that all sense of the pun originally intended is so obscured as to be practically lost.



He who has a white head in youth will be much sought after (少白頭, 有人求), with a view, that is, to gain his help in adjusting their affairs.

Despite their admiration for a certain amount of physical development, especially in a Magistrate, a person who is too large—as has been already observed in speaking of the Old Age Star (壽星老)—is by no means regarded with a favorable eye.

'For a person to be of great size, and still not a simpleton,—this is a real treasure' (大漢不默, 真寶貝).

'A person of great size is sure to be a fool; if not a fool, he must be vicious' (人要是大身量必默, 若不默必奸).

Many Chinese superstitions are based upon something which the Chinese have observed, or suppose they have observed, and upon which they put a peculiar interpretation of their own.

'Of three tigers at one birth, one will be a leopard; of nine dogs in a single litter, one will prove to be a Ao' (三虎出一豹, 九狗出一獒).

The Ao or Ngao, usually translated mastiff (see Mayer's Manual No. 52), is a creature whose amazing intelligence casts into a penumbra all that we know of the shaggy quadrupeds of St. Bernard and Newfoundland, or of the trained elephants of India. He is able to discriminate, for example, a loyal man from a traitor, and even to read human thoughts. Upon meeting a Ngao ordinary dogs are rooted to the spot, and unable to stir. In the Chou Dynasty when the northern barbarians brought tribute, there was among them a Ngao, and the duke of Chou exhorted Ch'eng Wang not to let the animal get away!

'A cow bringing forth a *ch'i lin*, a pig producing a *pén*' (牛生麒麟, 猪生奔). If a cow has three calves at a birth, one of them will turn out to be the famous 'unicorn,' which appears when sages are born. When there are eighteen pigs at a litter, one of them is a *pén*, a quadruped with one horn, a sort of cross between a horse and a pig. These animals die with great promptness, making it impossible to secure specimens for a menagerie!

'Children born within ten months after their parents' marriage, will always be poor' (邁門子兒, 窮到底兒). This proposition is regarded as an indubitable family axiom.

'If a widow who has remarried has a son soon after her marriage, she will make her second husband rich' (寡婦進門養小子, 必定發達後老子).

The attitude of the Chinese in general toward sayings of this sort, is well set forth in the comment of a teacher who remarked in reference to it, 'The saying, although incredible and extravagant, is, however, quite accurate. I have always noticed that when a daughter is born under these circumstances, the family never became wealthy, but when a son is born, they are sure to grow rich. I cannot explain why' (此言雖荒唐然極準, 每見生女者, 不發財, 生男者, 必發財, 不解何故).

Of the same character is the following: 'An orphan boy will have many sons and grandsons' (孤兒, 子孫多). This is also regarded as a 'fixed principle' (常理).

'Children that lose their mothers in infancy, will grow up to be interminable talkers' (從小兒沒娘說話長). This is another singular idea, which is now regarded as an indisputable proposition. When it is desired to convey an intimation that one is talking in a tiresome manner, it can be obliquely done by remarking: 'He probably lost his mother when he was small' (從小兒沒娘).

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance which the Chinese attach to a person's fate as determined by the horoscope. Men and places alike have their foreordained destiny (人有人運, 地有地運). Those who were born under an evil star can never escape its baleful influence, and carry their ill luck wherever they go. Hence the saying: 'A fate which induces ruin in every direction' (妨八敗命的運). This refers, for example, to women whose horoscope is unfavorable, and who, if any one is rash enough to marry them, bring calamity everywhere (八方). If the natal hour was unpropitious, such persons on crossing the threshold cause the death of the unhappy father-in-law and mother-in-law, and very likely of their husbands. The family often comes to complete ruin within a year. Thus, some children, as soon as they are able to eat, unwittingly exterminate their parents, and so on through all the dismal catalogue of evil auspices and effects.

The same superstition is referred to in the saying, 'The youth fated to have a short life, marrying a woman who is fated to ruin her husband' (短命的兒郎, 遇見妨夫的女).

A similar theory prevails as to the occult influence upon a bride of the weather at the time when she alights from the chair to enter her future husband's door. 'If it blows hard she will not prove a



good wife; if it rains she will not live long' (颱風不長, 下雨不長).<sup>\*</sup> Or, as in another version, 'If the bride is not a virtuous woman, it will either blow hard [while she is in her sedan chair], or else it will rain' (不賢良的女, 不颶風, 就下雨).

Notions of this sort, are capable of an indefinite amplification, and the Chinese are quite equal to the task.† Not only do men and even localities possess certain fated properties, but inanimate objects as well. Of this the 'jewel-dish' is a conspicuous example. Certain kinds of pottery—generally the coarser, such as large water jars—during the process of kiln-baking, contrive in some way to absorb exactly the proper proportion of the essential principle of the universe (天地精華之氣)—for in China everything whatever can be explained by means of some *ch'i* (氣)—and thereupon their qualities are such as to excite surprise, nearly resembling those of the cruse which held the oil provided by the prophet Elijah, for everything which they contain is at once multiplied.

There is a story of a certain fisherman in the Ming Dynasty, who cast his net with no other success than entangling in it a broken jar which was worthless for any purpose but that of feeding the pigs, for which he accordingly employed it. The next day he was surprised to find that his pigs had not eaten all their food, and on the third day when it had overflowed and formed pools in the court-yard, the truth first dawned upon him that this was a true *chü pao p'en* (聚寶盆), a precious dish of augmentation. How these vessels come to be always broken before they are capable of multiplying their contents, is as unaccountable as the circumstance that while in the possession of a person who has no luck (運氣), they absolutely refuse to work, whereas, as soon as the

<sup>\*</sup> This sentence is an example of the frequent impossibility—already referred to—of arriving with certainty at the meaning of a Chinese expression as heard. The very same words here cited, with the slight change of one character for another of the same sound, are in use as a weather proverb (颱風不涼, 下雨不長). 'If the wind blows and it is not cool, the rain will not last long.'

† In a country so devoted to fortune-telling as China, it is not strange that there is a formula for almost everything. Here, for instance, are rules to decide the month in which a bride ought to be married, according to the animal, under the influence of which (in the cycle of twelve), she may have been born. (正七迎雞兔, 二八虎和猴, 三九蛇和猪, 四十龍和狗, 牛羊五十一, 鼠馬六十二). 'The first and seventh moons, match the chicken and the hare; the second and the eighth, go with the tiger and the monkey; the third and the ninth with the serpent and the pig; the fourth and the tenth with the dragon and the dog; the ox and the sheep belong to the fifth and eleventh; the rat and the horse, to the sixth and the twelfth.'

inherently lucky man turns up as their owner, they begin to reduplicate their contents with cheerful regularity, whether those contents be the food of pigs, ingots of silver and gold, or jade and pearls. In an Occidental land this state of things would soon result in the engagement of some individual known to enjoy good luck, at each pottery kiln, to test every jar and dish as to its powers of reduplication, before it leaves its maker's hand. The faith of the Chinese, implicit as it is often found to be, does not, however, extend to this point.

There is a legend that in former times the south gate of the city of Tientsin could never be solidly built, for whatever the pains taken it always fell down. At last a wise and able man made the announcement that it was positively necessary to bury under the wall a *chū pao p'en* belonging to a certain Shên Wan Shan\* (沈萬山) which would repress the evil influences. To this the Shên family would naturally object that they wished to use their jewel pot themselves, but however this may be, means were found to overcome their scruples, and the dish was buried, which insured to the gate most indisputable 'pot-luck,' for it has never since fallen down. In proof of this legend, the circumstance is pointed out that unlike the other city gates, the exit of the enciente of the south gate is at right angles to the city wall and not in a line with the inner gate!† This statement of the theory and practice of the jewel-pot will render intelligible the saying, 'As

\* Shên Wan Shan is a name held in great esteem in China, as that of a reputed Croesus, who lived in the early part of the Ming Dynasty. His home is said to have been at Nanking, the first capital of the Mings, hence the saying: 'Shên Wan Shan of Nanking, and the great willow of Peking; the fame of the man, and the shadow of the tree' (南京的沈萬山, 北京的大柳樹, 人的名, 樹的影). The 'willow' is one which formerly existed, and is said to have cast a shadow 100 *li* in breadth! When Yen Wang (who became the Emperor Yung Lo), 'swept the North' (燕王掃北) with the besom of destruction, destroying, as is said, every human being within vast areas, he is reported to have exhausted his own resources, and to have called in the aid of Shên Wan Shan, whose inexhaustible treasures are popularly attributed to his ownership of the multiplying-pot just described. From this tradition he is called 'the living god-of-wealth,' and one who is extremely prosperous, is likened to him: (好似活財神, 沈萬山一般). 'It is impossible to be richer than Shên Wan Shan' (富貴不過沈萬山). The use of this famous name in connection with the Tientsin legend, may be due to the circumstance that in each case public results of some importance were alleged to have been accomplished by the assistance of a single private individual, a phenomenon in China of very infrequent occurrence.

† The influence of this dish of the Shên family seems to have been exhausted during the winter of 1900-1901, when the Tientsin Provisional Government leveled the city wall and all its gates, to make a broad boulevard for an electric railway!



I have no jewel-dish, I cannot meet your reckless expenditures  
(我沒有聚寶盆, 經不起你胡花).

A similar doctrine is enounced in the expression, 'Do not take him for a money-shaking tree' (別拿他當作搖錢樹). This 'money tree' is well known, but no one ever distinctly saw a specimen, and it is therefore not botanically classified. Its branches are hung full of cash, which the slightest disturbance is sufficient to precipitate in showers to the ground!

The belief, common in Oriental lands, in the power of one person to injure another in occult ways, is firmly held in China. It is alleged that a custom of secret poisoning is prevalent in all the southern provinces, from Fukien to Szech'uan. This is accomplished by means of spells which are conveyed to the food, which is eventually fatal to him who eats it. In the districts where this art is practiced malaria is said to prevail, so that the inhabitants dare not rise early in the morning. The methods of 'planting the poison' differ. In some instances a sword is metamorphosed into a mustard seed, which is mixed with the food or tea; others effect the same change with a stone, or a serpent. The poison, in whatever form, is capable of remaining in the alimentary tract for a term of years, in a perfectly inert condition, awaiting the pleasure of the holder of the potent spell. Whenever he or she chooses to exercise the mysterious power in their hands, whatever the distance of space between the person pronouncing the spell and the victim, the poison operates with terrible rapidity. It is a singular and somewhat convenient peculiarity of this deadly influence, that it is innocuous as against natives of another province; by three years' residence, however, they may be so far naturalized as to become eligible to its benefits. Hence the saying: 'Giving poison, and also selling the food in which it is mixed' (又種蟲, 又賣飯的). The proverb is used metaphorically of one who under guise of friendship, inflicts a fatal injury.

The most trivial incidents when read in the light of superstition, become pregnant with meaning. Thus the advent of a strange cat, or the departure of a dog, is held by some to be an omen: 'When new cats come and old dogs go, the owners grow rich whether or no' (來貓去狗, 不賺自有).

'After shaving the head or taking a bath, never gamble' (剃頭洗澡莫賭錢). Otherwise you will be sure to lose, but this is no

more than happens to confirmed gamblers, no matter how unshaven and dirty they may be: 'If they gamble continuously even gods and fairies will lose' (常賭神仙輸).

Among the extraordinary proceedings at Chinese *post mortem* examinations, the identification of bones may be instanced. If there is any question as to whether a particular bone is that of a man whose sons are living, the simple rule is to let one of the latter gnaw his finger until the blood runs, and allow it to drip on the surface of the bone. If it remains on the surface, then this proves that the dead man was not a 'blood relation,' or at least not a father. If, however, the blood promptly soaks in, the reverse is the case. Hence the proverb: 'When fresh blood enters the bone, it shows the heaven bestowed affinity between father and son' (鮮血入骨, 父子天性).

The Chinese, like the gipsies, and many other peoples, tell fortunes by the lines upon the inside of the fingers. The circular striæ upon the finger tips are called *tou* (斗), a peck, while those which are curved, without forming a circle are styled *chi* (箕), being supposed to resemble a dust-pan. Hence the following saying: 'One peck, poor; two pecks, rich; three pecks, four pecks, open a pawn-shop; five pecks, be a go-between; six pecks, be a thief; seven pecks, meet calamities; eight pecks, eat chaff; nine pecks, and one dust-pan, no work to do,—eat till you are old' (一斗窮, 二斗富, 三斗四斗開當舖, 五斗說媒, 六斗做賊, 七斗遭殃, 八斗吃糠, 九斗一簸箕, 到老坐着吃).

'Wang the Taoist priest catching the imp,—ignorant devil-pounding' (王道捉妖, 瞎搗鬼). This refers to a tradition of a Sung Dynasty priest who undertook to read magic formulas so as to capture the 'White Serpent Sprite' (白蛇精). He did not understand his business and 'caught a Tartar,' and was seriously injured by the imp which he undertook to subdue.

The phrase *tao kuei* (搗鬼) is in colloquial use, in the sense of *soliloquising*—as if a person, who when quite alone yet talks, were having a sparring match with a devil. The proverb is used of a person who says something to himself which is unintelligible to others, or of two persons talking in a secret dialect (私語).

'When men are old they are of no use; when wares are old they become antiquities; when beasts and birds are old they become sprites' (人老無用, 物老出古, 禽獸老了成精).



'A Lizard worshipping the Northern Bushel [Dipper] provoking a thunder-clap' (蜥虎子拜北斗。要作雷)。

The lizard is one of the five noxious animals, and its secretions are regarded as very deadly to man. It is but a few inches in length, but if it grows to a length of three feet, it is sure to become a sprite. The object of its worshipping the Dipper is to obtain the transforming influences of this Constellation, by which it might assume a human form. Should this take place, it would do indefinite mischief to men, therefore Heaven does not suffer it to succeed, but strikes it with a thunder-bolt! The saying is employed of one who has needlessly provoked a great calamity.

There are five of these noxious animals (五毒), to wit, the Snake, the Scorpion, the Frog, the Centipede, and the Lizard (蛇, 蠍子, 蛤蟆, 蜈蚣, 蠍虎子), and they are all *spritely* in their disposition, that is to say, when they are old they become sprites. Having achieved this transformation, they try to do mischief as just mentioned, by means of magic arts (法力邪術). This species of mischief is spoken of as *tso hao*, or *pai tso hao*; hence one who is disposed to make a disturbance is dissuaded from it, by the phrase *pieh tso hao* (別作耗). If the noxious animals attempt any great mischief, they are sure to be smitten by a thunder-bolt, as in the case of the Lizard just cited.

'The *Ma Hu tzu* has not yet come out of the sleeve' (馬虎子還未出袖兒了). The *Ma Hu tzu*, also known as a *P'i Hu tzu* (皮虎子), is an imaginary monster often used by parents and nurses to frighten unruly children. Its home is in the mountains, and it is an evil demon (妖怪) like many others. It is said to haunt grave-yards, and there is a (local) legend of one which, being not quite master of its supernatural powers, was caught. Hence the local saying, 'The *P'i hu tzu* of the Wang family grave,—awkward' (王家墳墓的皮虎子笨)。

'If you offend Lao Lang, the god of the play-actors, whomsoever you personate you will not be like him' (你得罪了老浪神, 裝甚麼不像甚麼). This Lao Lang divinity is popularly supposed to be Ming Huang (明皇), or Hsüan Tsung. (玄宗) an Emperor of the T'ang Dynasty (see Mayer's Manual, 504), who was fond of theatricals, and who has become the god of play-actors. His assumption of this position is a type of the process by which the evolution of divinities in China has taken place for many ages.

No actor is supposed to succeed without his aid. The saying is used to intimate that whatever a person does is sure to go wrong.

'You have only run against the Five Spirits' (你莫非撞見五道了麼). *Wu Tao* are five Evil Spirits (邪神). If a person in a state of intoxication chances to run into them he immediately becomes bewitched (瘋迷). This is the reason why, when a person is sufficiently drunk to be vicious, the strength of several men is insufficient to control him,—'He acts as if he had run against the Five Demons.'

'Yellow Foxes and Black Foxes; whichever skulks away is the inferior' (黃狸黑狸得竄者雌). When domestic cats become old, they retire to the mountains, and become sprites (成妖精) and are especially fond of eating the large beasts there to be found. In case of contests between themselves, whichever is defeated, and obliged to escape, is regarded as the feeble (雌 female). The saying is used of one who makes great pretensions, but who is after all obliged to yield, like the English proverb: 'The weaker goes to the wall.'

The superstitions of the Chinese in regard to the Fox would involve a long essay (most readers, however, will be satisfied with the summary given in Mayer's Manual No. 183). The most dangerous variety is the nine-tailed, which is unapproachable in its capacity to bewitch mankind; hence the saying used of one who is an extremely subtle and dangerous enemy to imitate: 'He is like a nine-tailed Fox, bad to provoke' (他是九尾狐狸似的. 不好惹).

'The Tiger and the Leopard are perpetually anxious lest they encounter the Unicorn; Dragons are extremely afraid of the Centipede' (虎豹常愁逢獬豸. 蛟龍最怕遇蜈蚣). The Unicorn is somewhat like a dog, and somewhat like a deer, about two feet in height, and has a horn on its head. From this horn back to the tail the spine appears to have been ground off to an edge like a sword. Its progress is as rapid as lightning. When it sees an enemy, the Unicorn backs up against it, which has the effect of immediately disemboweling its adversary. Its secretions are so venomous as to corrode the flesh. Man is the only animal not subjugated by the Unicorn. The Centipede is gifted with the capacity to enter the skulls of Dragons and other monsters through the ears or nose, and once in, he treacherously eats out the brains. On this account he is much dreaded by Dragons. He is only about two inches in length,



and of a pearl color. Now there is found in the provinces of Yunnan, Kueichou, and Ssuch'uan. a gigantic double-headed Serpent, or Python\* (兩頭蟒), the intelligence of which seems to be equalled only by that of the Ao (獒), already described. This Serpent has the art of ascertaining the names of individuals, and also uses human language. When solitary travellers in those mountain districts are startled to hear their names distinctly pronounced, then it may be known that the Two-headed Python is on their trail. But kindly Nature has so ordered it, that every object has some enemy which can attack and reduce it (一物降一物). In the very provinces where the Python abounds—just as the cork-tree flourishes in some wine-growing countries—there is its natural antidote in the Flying Centipede (飛蜈蚣).

In a certain district a traveller had heard this ominous voice uttering his own name, but being a stranger, he failed to understand its significance. On reaching his inn, he told his tale to the landlord, who at once informed him that he had become the victim of the poisonous Python, which would infallibly call and devour his heart at the third watch of the night.

This cheerful intelligence was, however, accompanied by a valuable prophylactic—to wit, a small box, which the traveller was to use for a pillow. In this box, he was informed, was a pair of jade Centipedes of the flying species, which must by no means be released from their imprisonment, lest they do serious mischief. At the proper time they would come out of their own accord.

The traveller carefully observed these instructions, and sure enough at the third watch there was a sound like that of wind. This was the arrival of the Python. At that instant the little box opened, the Flying Centipedes emerged, and promptly disappeared through a window. The Serpent on meeting his enemies was powerless, and was immediately vanquished by them in the manner described. By daylight his struggles were over, but the Centipedes having enjoyed their freedom, had no idea of returning to their coffin but flew away and were seen no more. As they cost originally fifty ounces of silver, their loss was naturally a source of grief to

\* The Chinese believe in a two-headed serpent called a 'White-flower-snake' (白花蛇), which is referred to in the following proverb: 'He is a serpent with two heads,—a perfect white-flower-snake' (一個長虫兩腦袋, 雙頭白花蛇), a saying used of excessive talkers, who seem to have two heads—no answering them.

the inn-keeper. His sorrow was, however, much mitigated by the fact that the Serpent, dead in his yard, had as many joints as a bamboo grove, and each joint consisted of a magnificent pearl, which when sold, made the net profit about one million *per cent.* on the Centipede investment!

'The golden crow sinks in the west; the jade rabbit rises in the east' (金烏西墜玉兔東昇). The 'golden crow' or 'golden chicken' is a name for the sun, and the 'jade rabbit' indicates the moon. [See Mayers' Manual, No. 724.]

'The silver bullion given to another returns again to me; the water-beetle flies away, and flies home again' (白鏰贈君還贈我, 青蚨飛去復飛來). This Couplet, frequently seen in Chinese shops, is based on the superstition, mentioned in Williams' Dictionary s.v. *Fu* (蚨), that two insects of this species, though separated for a time, will find their way back to each other again. In some regions it is customary to catch two of these beetles—a male and female—and rub their blood on a string of cash, which is then expended in the ordinary course of trade, care being taken to reserve a few for a rallying point for the rest, which, owing to the magic power of the beetles' blood, will all find their way at the third watch of the night to the point of departure!

'If you have a dream which is infelicitous, write it on a wall facing the south, as soon as the sun shines on it, the interpretation will become auspicious' (得夢不祥, 寫在南牆, 太陽一照, 化爲吉祥).

'If you invite those who inspect houses and graveyards, you may as well move your dwelling altogether' (家有陰陽宅, 房子挪起來). This refers to the geomancers (看陰陽宅的), whose 'intricate nonsense' is based upon a complication of compacted absurdities. They will endeavor to persuade a man that his door is slightly out of the line of maximum felicity, that his windows are in the wrong place, that the graves must be transplanted, etc., etc. If one once gives way to this superstition, he might as well pull his house down and remove it, as to do it piecemeal.

There is a story of one of these wandering geomancers who came to an eating house, in front of which was a tray in which baked cakes are exposed to tempt hungry travellers. These cakes are sprinkled with sesame seeds, which adhere slightly to the surface, and many of them fall off. In this case all the cakes had



been sold, but the bottom of the tray was covered with fragrant seeds, which stimulated the appetite of the impecunious geomancer. Half a loaf is better than nothing, and even oiled sesame seeds have a value when cakes are unattainable. Approaching the shop the traveller sat down, and adroitly drew the cake-seller into conversation on the merits of the situation which he had chosen for business. The geomancer illustrated each point by means of lines drawn with his finger in the (apparently) empty tray, but just as he was drawing each line he took care to wet his finger, ostensibly to make the line more distinct, but in reality that as many sesame seeds as possible might thus be conveyed to his mouth. In this way he drew the boundaries of the premises, the partitions, the doors, and windows, showing that each one was in substantial accordance with the best geomantic science. By this time, the sesame seeds were nearly all transferred to the lecturer's mouth, and as he concluded his remarks, he struck the tray a smart blow with the palm of his hand, making the remaining seeds collect in a heap, which was dexterously removed as he summed up with the observation: "In short the whole thing is quite complete!"

An analogy between the detection of the position of the good and evil influences, upon tracing which the geomancer's skill depends, and art of determining the grain of knotty and gnarled wood, is recognized in the saying: 'He who has split firewood for three years, is fit to inspect grave yards' (三年打柴會看墳塋).

'If three shocks of an earthquake are felt, the beggars throw away their gourds' (地動三搖, 花子放下瓢). This signifies that the harvest will be abundant, and the beggar will not need his calabash.

That the entrance of an owl into a dwelling is a most unfavorable sign, has been already noticed elsewhere. 'He never comes on an errand of good omen' (夜貓子進宅, 無事不來).

In like manner the chatter of a flock of crows is a sign that discordant voices will be heard (解災的咒語), after which no ill is to be apprehended.

'Let the red mouths ascend to heaven, let the white tongues enter the earth' (赤口上天, 白舌入地). The expression 'red mouth' is used to indicate bickering; the phrase 'white tongues' denotes those who defame or injure one by 'talking behind one's back' (背地裏的話).

The whole social life of the Chinese is regulated upon the principle that certain days, places, and conjunctions are in themselves lucky or unlucky, and the theory has been elaborated with ingenious care into one of the most gigantic systems of superstition the world has ever seen, which is as difficult of demolition as a castle in the air.

The following saying embodies the view said to have been current from very ancient times in regard to three unlucky days in each month: 'On the fifth, the fourteenth, and the twenty-third, do not venture to risk the Pill of Immortality in the furnace of *Lao Chün*'\* (初五, 十四, 二十三, 老君爐裏不煉丹). The Emperor Ch'ien Lung, however, who had a mind of his own, denounced this absurdity, and is supposed by a felicitous pun to have changed these from 'days to be avoided' (忌日) into 'fortunate days' (吉日).

This vast reserve power lodged in the speech of the one man of the empire, gives occasion for the proverb: 'You must be like the Emperor,—a golden mouth and pearly words' (你莫非屬皇上的金口玉言). As an example of the far reaching effects of the words spoken by the Sovereign, it is related of Ch'ien Lung—who seems like Frederick the Great, and other noted monarchs, to have had the art of causing anecdotes about himself to multiply—that on one occasion he was travelling about in disguise, as was his wont, when he entered an establishment where the workmen were engaged in making a peculiar variety of incense known as *kac hsiang* (高香). On account of the extreme heat of the place, the laborers had thrown off all their clothes. "Alas!" exclaimed His Majesty, "all these men are like beggars!" This was more than a century ago, yet such is the momentum of an imperial exclamation, that from that time to this no person who makes incense has ever grown rich, and all because of this one expression!

It is for this reason that the proverb runs: 'In the mouth of the Court (Emperor) there is no insignificant word' (朝廷口裏無虛言).

In exemplification of this axiom that the words of the Emperor are like the wind, which when it blows makes the grass bend (風行草偃), it is said that, whereas deep red and purple had

\* Somewhat similar is the current adage: Do not leave home on a 7th [the 7th, 17th or 27th of the moon] nor return on an 8th (七不出, 八不歸).



hitherto been the favorite colors for court, Ch'ien Lung preferred pink, a circumstance which has had a permanent effect upon the market value of this article for more than a hundred years.

There is a species of pottery called *sha lü* (沙綠) which was held in very light esteem, but an Empress of Tao Kuang took a fancy to this particular ware, and called it after the peacock (孔雀瓷). To the present day this article is much sought, but the dealers in curios have apparently exhausted the supply. Thus, as Mencius observes, when those in a superior station are devoted to anything, those below them will be even more devoted to the same thing (上有好者, 下必有甚焉).

A peculiar sacredness is attached not only to the person of the Emperor, but to everything related to him or about him. Emperors like Ch'ien Lung were in the habit of making not only secret excursions, but long journeys. This involved numerous travelling palaces (行宮), some of which are still in existence.

One of these formerly stood on the east bank, of the Peiho, at Tientsin, but during the reign of Tao Kuang, the Emperor was memorialized, and it was ordered to be taken down and the materials put to other uses. The empty building, however, had become the head quarters of certain imps (妖怪), which assumed the forms of various animals, compendiously described by the natives as Fox, Yellow, White, Willow, and Ash (狐, 黃, 白, 柳, 灰). The first are, of course, Foxes, the second are the Weasels (黃鼠狼), the third Hedgehogs (from the color), the fourth Snakes (which are long like willow sticks), and the last Rats, which are ash-coloured. These animals are much dreaded, and are worshipped under the name of the Five Great Families (五大家). These goblins rendered every one of the workmen who had been concerned in the work crazy. The popular faith in this legend is evidenced by the saying: 'This business is like pulling down the Emperor's travelling palace' (這光景好似拆了行宮似的), which is used of one who creates a disturbance as if he were possessed.

'Like running against the claws (of the five Animals),—turbulent insanity' (招了瓜子似的, 瘋鬧). This is another illustration of the principle propounded in the last proverb. These animals are able to make themselves invisible (隱形) and, as already explained, to bewitch human beings. They are fond of wine, and when they have taken enough to make themselves tipsy, they have

an objectionable habit of lying down in the road. If any one steps on their claws at such times, he is promptly bewitched. Still, much depends on the character of the individual, for if it chance to be a person of uprightness and integrity, he is not in the least affected by the Five Animals. The saying last quoted is used of one who makes any outrageous disturbance.

It is perhaps due to the association of these several animals in one class, that the current saying is due: 'The Weasel eating the Hedgehog,—gentlemen injuring gentlemen'\* (黃鼠狼吃蝟, 爺們毀爺們), i.e., those bound by common interest ought to play into one another's hands. The idea is similarly expressed in the proverb: 'When a great flood washes away the temple of the Dragon King—who controls the water,—this is a case where one member of a family fails to recognize another member of the family' (大水沖了龍王廟, 一家不認的一家人).

'Good men have fire three feet above their heads; evil spirits would do well to avoid it' (好人頭上三尺火, 是邪是鬼都得躲). As this mysterious light (靈光) above the head is bright in proportion to the virtue of the individual illuminated, it would seem to be an easy matter to discriminate the good from the bad.

A similar saying is current in regard to men as distinguished from women: 'A man has fire three feet above his head' (男子頭上有三尺火). This denotes his strength, and that he "belongs to" the 'light principle' (屬陽), while women "belong to" the 'dark principle' (屬陰).

The locality here named is exactly the same as that assigned to spirits in general, which in many sayings are affirmed to be just above the heads of men, 'mounted on clouds and riding on the mist' (騰雲駕霧). 'Three feet above our heads are spirits' (頭上三尺有神靈).

'The spirits of those who have died wrongfully will not disperse' (死的屈, 冤魂不散). The three souls, and seven animal souls (三魂七魄), with which man is popularly supposed to be endowed, are said to dissolve partnership at his death, according to the classical

\* The well known predatory habits of the weasel give occasion to the following saying at his expense: 不偷雞也是偷雞. 'A weasel running around a hen-coop; he does not steal chickens (because he cannot get at them) and he does steal chickens.' The words 'steal chickens' (偷雞), as first occurring, are intended (by a double pun) to suggest the words, 'gain an opportunity' (投機), and the saying is used of one who did not steal, only because he missed the chance to do so.



saying, 'the spirits ascend to heaven, the animal soul enters the earth' (魂升於天, 魄降於地).

The saying about the inability of the spirit to disperse, is employed metaphorically of one 'who comes but never goes,' or who if he disappears for a short time, like the fly in the fable, soon returns.

'The spirits of those who have died wrongfully tangle the legs of the murderer' (冤魂纏腿); the maxim that it is impossible for one who has shed human blood to escape 'the net' (天網)—Heaven's net—depends upon the principle here enounced. He cannot escape because the spirit of his victim pursues him like the Furies of Greek tragedy, and will inevitably bring him to justice at last. The proverb is employed of a creditor perpetually harassing a debtor, etc.

'If you are in your senses, how came you to die on the *k'ang*?' (你即明白, 爲甚麼死在炕上). When a person is expected to die he is made to put on his best clothes, and removed from the *k'ang* or 'stove-bed' on which he has been sick, to a wooden couch. If he were to die on the *k'ang*, his spirit would be sure to go to Hades direct. Besides this, the *k'ang* is made of earth without any opening in the top for the breath or *ch'i*, and if a man should die on it, he might be obliged to carry it on his back for ever!

'When a man dies he becomes a ghost; when a ghost dies it becomes a *chi*' (人死做鬼, 鬼死做爿). This is one of the few proverbs which are quotations from K'ang Hsi Dictionary, which sites it from the Liao Chai. We are there informed that just as men are afraid when they espy a ghost, so ghosts are affrighted when they espy a *chi* (人死作鬼, 人見懼之, 鬼死作爿, 鬼見怕之). Hence, if this word *chi* is inscribed on a door in the seal character (篆書), all varieties of goblins and devils will keep a thousand *li* away—a circumstance which would appear to render it comparatively easy to keep all devils out of the empire. No information is afforded us as to the real nature of the *chi*, nor as to the conditions under which 'ghosts die.'

'So angry that the three spirits of the body jump wildly about, and the five dominant influences fly into space' (只氣的三尸神躁跳, 五雷豪氣飛空).

We are indebted to the Taoist Book of Rewards and Punishments (感應篇) for the most of what we know of these spirits

where we are informed that they dwell within the body, and are cognizant of all a man's acts, which they report to the heavenly authorities at fixed times. According to others, these three spirits are three brothers(!) named *P'êng*. One of them is posted in the head, and has charge of what is seen, heard, and spoken; the second dwells in the abdomen, and supervises the heart; the third is posted at the feet, and regulates the acts (行動) of men. The character *shih* (尸) denotes a corpse, and there is no obvious explanation of its use, in connection with the spirits presiding over the living. In Williams' Dictionary the phrase in question is quoted (but with the omission of 'the character signifying spirits) and the translation altogether ignores the words 'three corpses,' as follows: 'He danced and hopped about from the excess of his rage.' The second clause is almost as unintelligible as the first, and the enigmatical phrase 'five thunders brave atmosphere' (五雷豪氣) has led to an emendation, a shade less incomprehensible, which substitutes for the words 'five thunders' (五雷), 'five insides' (五內), denoting that the five *ch'i* are within the five viscera.

'When a padlock is put around the collar-bone, though he has arts of escape he cannot employ them' (鎖子穿了琵琶骨, 有法也變不出來). When an evil spirit (邪魔) attacks one, the true method of defence is said to be to seize the goblin firmly, and deftly insert a lock under the 'guitar-bone' (with which spirits appear to be provided), which once done, renders it impossible for the evil spirit to escape—unless, as one would naturally expect, he should decamp, carrying the padlock with him!

'Reckless running, as if chased by a corpse come to life' (像乍了尸一般的亂跑). It is a prevalent belief that the bodies of the dead, before they have been placed in the coffins, are liable to rise from the bed in a very abrupt style, and dash out of the house at midnight, in pursuit of some one to seize. If they happen to meet anyone, even if it chance to be a near and much loved relative, these bewitched corpses immediately claw them to death! The saying is quoted of one who runs rapidly, as if pursued by such an apparition.

It is only human spirits that return to vex and terrify the survivors, for those of even the most ferocious animals are innocuous. Hence the proverb: 'When a man dies, he becomes like a savage tiger; but when a tiger dies, he becomes like a lamb' (人死如猛虎, 虎死如綿羊).



'Disturbed in spirit,—as if a cat trod on one's heart' (心神不定, 貓蹬心). The Chinese, like the superstitions in occidental lands, dread the tread of a cat upon a corpse. If it steps over the heart, it is believed that the dead person will spring up, as mentioned in the last paragraph, and claw some one to death. The saying is used of one in extreme terror or confusion, like the condition of a dead man come to life.

Some account has been already given, in speaking of the dissection of Chinese characters, of the various theories of the proper way of purifying the pill of immortality (煉丹). The essence of the five viscera (heart, liver, stomach, lungs, and kidneys) is to be collected in the pubic region (丹田), while the spirit (which comprises the body and soul transformed) after its threefold sublimation, is gathered in the head. Of this complicated process the following saying is an epitome: 'The three transformations collected in the head; the five principles gathered at the fountain of life' (三華聚頂, 五氣朝元). When the process is completed the spirit is able to go off into distant realms, leaving the body in a condition of sleep or trance. When this work of sublimation is finished the spirit becomes immortal, and is gifted with wonderful powers. 'It can collect in visible form, and it can disperse into vapor' (聚則成形, 散則氣).

The professors of the art of securing immortality by purification are divided into rival schools, much resembling the Big-endians and the Little-endians, whose disputes as to the orthodox way of breaking open an egg so greatly edified Capt. Gulliver on his voyage to Lilliput.

#### CHINESE PROPHECIES.

From superstitions concerning things that happen, it is but a step to superstitions in regard to things which are expected to happen. Prophecy has been described as one of the 'lost arts.' It has been long lost, but the Chinese have long since found it, and it is one of those arts which they will not willingly let die.

Among the little books known to the Chinese, which exert an influence out of all proportion to their magnitude, is one known as the *Tui Pei Tu* (推背圖), sometimes designated—from the tradition of its origin—the *Tui Pei Tu* (對背圖) or Chart of Opposing Backs. It is said to have been composed at the time

of the overthrow of the Sui Dynasty and during the early struggles of the following T'ang Dynasty:

Two individuals of great celebrity, known to fame as Yüan T'ien Kang (袁天罡) and Li Ch'un Feng (李淳風), were the authors. These men were expert reckoners and diviners, deeply versed in the secrets of nature (五行陰陽之理).

Perceiving the degenerate times upon which their lot had fallen, they refused to continue in office, and retired to a hermit life in the depths of the mountains. Here they elaborated their theory of history—a theory which may be compendiously described as the Evolution of Revolution.

According to this hypothesis, apparently based upon a remark by Mencius, every three hundred years, more or less, a small rebellion is to be expected, and every five hundred years, more or less, a great rebellion. After the latter emerges a legitimate ruler who tranquilizes the empire, and another cycle begins. Thus they foresaw that after the débris of the expiring Sui Dynasty had been swept up, would arise the T'ang, and beyond this they failed to perceive clearly what was to ensue. In order to ascertain this important point, these ready reckoners seated themselves back to back, to cipher out the unknown. The rules of this prognosticating arithmetic are not confided to the general public, which has had its capacities taxed to the utmost to comprehend the results.

Yüan took his pen and drew pictures, while Li took his pen and wrote sentences. Neither saw the work of the other, yet the picture was illustrative of the sentences and the sentences of the picture, in a way which, while unintelligible at the time to outsiders, would be readily recognized after the event as predictions.

At length, however, these joint editors of the Book of Fate encountered an unexpected and decisive check. An old man descended from Heaven, his whole body clothed in light, holding in his hand a little bird and thus addressed them:—"This bird in my hand is for you to exercise your prophetic faculties upon—to say whether, when I open my hand, it shall prove to be alive or dead. If you say that it is alive, I have but to clench my fist and the bird is dead. If, however, you say that it is dead, I open my hand and let it fly away. Now if you cannot predict the fortunes of a bird for an instant how can you venture to unravel the ages of the future."



Yuan and Li felt the force of this reasoning, and perceiving that Shang Ti was angry with them, they ventured on no further predictions, but broke up their pens and retired. Had they likewise destroyed the results of their labors, posterity would have been spared many anxious hours.

The influence which the T'ui Pei T'u has exerted, and still continues to exert upon the Chinese mind, is a remarkable phenomenon. It is popularly regarded in much the same light in which Christian nations view the Apocalypse of St John the Apostle, as unquestionably supernatural in origin, and as comprising a pictorial summary of human history, the import of which will not be exhausted, nor fully comprehended, until the end of all things. There is good reason to believe that this chart is known and accepted as an authority all over the empire.

In all ages prophecy has been a formidable political weapon. Those who have ventured to utter predictions not in harmony with the views of the national rulers, have not unfrequently paid for their prophetic wisdom with their liberty or with their lives. (So, for example, Micaiah, I. Kings xxii, and Jeremiah xxxii.)

All Jews, as Canon Farrar remarks, regarded the Fourth Empire in Daniel's Prophecy as the Roman; but when Josephus comes to the stone which is to dash the image in pieces, he stops short, and says that he does not think it proper to explain it—for the obvious reason that it would have been politically dangerous for him to do so.

It is not to be supposed that Chinese Emperors, who have never recognized a race of inspired prophets, should tolerate the diffusion of predictions which point to the overthrow of their own power. Hence the T'ui Pei T'u has long since been placed upon the Chinese Index Expurgatorius, and the possession of a copy is regarded as unsafe. All the copies are in writing, and none are printed.

As it is not every day nor in every country that one lights upon secret prophecies of almost if not universally accepted authenticity and authority, the writer has been at some pains to procure different copies for examination and comparison. To one of these copies is prefixed, by way of Preface, a Memorial which professes to have been presented to the second Emperor of the T'ang Dynasty, T'ai Tsung (唐太宗) whose style was Chen Kuan (貞觀), and the

Memorial is dated in the twenty-seventh year of that monarch's reign, and is, therefore, at the present writing just one thousand two hundred and forty years of age!

The authentication of the age of a book of this sort is obviously impossible, but probably not one Chinese reader in a thousand would ever think of disputing its alleged date, and not one reader in ten thousand would take the trouble to investigate the matter. In a few words introductory to the Memorial, we are informed that no one who has not vast and profound scholarship is able to inquire into the unfathomable mysteries of this book (推背圖一書, 非才廣學深者, 勿可與觀察, 其詳奧妙無窮). It is cherished in imperial households, and handed down from generation to generation, and is not to be lightly perused. Those who are fortunate enough to inspect its concealed wisdom may escape the calamity of flood, fire, and violence.

Supplementary to the strictly prophetic part of the book, is a final picture representing the two authors back to back at their work, opposite to which is a verse in praise of their labors, which is followed by a few sentences in prose, reaffirming the value of the book, declaring its supernatural origin (豈人力能爲哉), and purporting to be written by Liu Po Wen, a councillor of the founder of the Ming Dynasty. Liu Po Wen (劉伯溫) is himself regarded by the Chinese as a great prophet. One of his sayings has been already quoted in another connection. The date of this appended note purports to be the third year of Hung Wu (洪武), or 1391, and it would be therefore more than five hundred years old!

The T'ui Pei T'u is far from being simply prophecy. Its first diagram represents P'an Ku, the first of mortals, as standing with the sun in one hand and the moon in the other! But whether it be regarded as a compendium of history or of prophecy, the average student of this work will probably find himself at every turn entirely out of his depth. In one spot only is there a short bridge spanning the chasm between the now known past and the still unknown future. The thirty-eighth picture represents a tree with a rule to measure heaven (量天尺) hanging to its branches, and beneath the tree a Buddhist priest. In the last line of the appended verse, occur the words: 'A disciple of Buddha is the Prince' (釋子是君王). This priest is, of course, Chu Yuan



Chang (朱元璋), who rose from a Buddhist monastery to the place of founder of a Dynasty (as just mentioned) under the title of Hung Wu.

The next picture represents a plum tree, with a single plum depending, and in the plum (李) is a human eye. In some copies the plum tree is depicted as growing from the wall of a city. The most benighted sceptic must know that this is a distinctive prophecy of the rebel Li Tzu Ch'eng (李自成)—that is to say, the plum growing from the city (李自城)—who was blind of one eye, and went by the name of Li hsia-tzu (李瞎子). This was the individual who headed the rebellion against the Ming Dynasty and overthrew it, making himself Emperor in its place. His imperial dignities endured but for a few months, when he was overthrown by the Tartars.

This event had been predicted in the accompanying verse, in the words: 'In one day the Universe will belong to the Great Pure' (一旦乾坤屬大清.) The succeeding picture represents eight flags, which are, of course, a prophecy of the Eight Banners (八旗) of the Manchus, but the details of the drawing are not very intelligible, e.g., five colors in the flags, which are held by four boys. The appended verse, like the other verses, only sheds a little additional darkness on the prophetic prospect.

From this point onward—exclusive of the final eulogistic verse of Liu Po Wen—there still remained twenty-five pictures, each apparently signifying a new line of Emperors, or *about thirty-eight per cent. of the whole volume*, a field for the student of prophecy of sufficient area to satisfy the most exacting. The two copies of this prophetic chart here described were obtained in places hundreds of miles apart, and in different provinces. A general comparison of their contents discloses some discrepancies, highly instructive, although somewhat depressing to the student of prophecy.

1.—The *number* of the verses and pictures. In one copy this is sixty-seven, while in the other it is sixty-eight. The absence of one verse and one picture shortens, of course, the history of the Empire by an entire Dynasty.

2.—The *order* of the verses and pictures. There are *ten cases* of simple inversion, such as where the fifteenth in one is the sixteenth of the other, etc. This is a little confusing to the prophetic student, if he be at all fond of chronology. From number

sixty onwards the order in the two copies is altogether different. The regular series in the one copy, from sixty-one to sixty-seven, corresponds in the other to the numbers 63, 64, 65, 66, 61, 62, 68. The copyists have written the verses on loose sheets, and then tacked them together wrongly (neither copy has any number appended), to the great confusion and undoing of futurity.

3.—The verses regularly contain four lines of seven characters each, but in cases where a character has become illegible, or is evidently a mistake, the copyist sometimes leaves a gap. In other cases he fills in the character which seems to him best to suit the situation. On the other hand, the lines are occasionally redundant.

4.—One character is often written for another which resembles it in form. Thus *t'u* (兔) is found in one copy, and *erh* (兒) in another. Futurity runs, in this way, great risks.

5.—Homophony is another source of disquietude to futurity. The copyist wrote while some one else read, and he sometimes sets down characters which resemble each other in sound only—as *chi* (幾) for *chiu* (九).

6.—Totally unlike characters are often substituted for one another, as Dragon (龍) for Ox (牛), Snake (蛇) for Tiger (虎), Rat (鼠) for Woman (女), a base Man (奸人) for a good Man (好人), etc. Changes of this nature are adapted to confound futurity with a great confusion.

7.—Variation in pictures. Not every copyist is able to execute even a Chinese drawing. Each picture is therefore furnished with a short description of what it ought to contain. These descriptions often vary. It is not easy to decide exactly how much variation is allowable in two copies of the same prophetic picture. A comparison shows that about *thirty per cent.* of the pictures (that is of the descriptions) in the two copies, vary materially.

8.—*Proportion of variations in language.* In order to determine this proportion, the lines were divided into three classes: those which are identical in form; those which vary in expression, but convey essentially the same meaning; those which differ so widely as altogether to alter the sense. The latter class of discrepancies vary from cases in which a single character is altered, to the many instances in which not a single character nor a single idea is common to the two. Of the whole number of lines, about 16.91



*per cent.* are the same in both copies; 41.35 *per cent.* vary in expression, and 41.73 *per cent.* vary essentially in meaning.

One of the phrases which is sometimes quoted as contained in the *Tui Pei Tu* (but which does not appear to be found there), predicts that 'Iron trees shall bear flowers' (鐵樹開花), which is supposed to mean a change of Dynasty. It is said that many years ago the fulfillment of this saying was recognized by the Chinese in Shanghai in the iron lamp posts there erected, surmounted by flowers of golden flame.

This expression has also become part of a popular proverb. It is well known that each of the twelve branches (十二地支), which denote twelve successive years, has its symbolical animal, as Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, etc., in which list, however, the donkey does not appear. The saying, 'When iron trees bear flowers, and when the donkey year arrives' (鐵樹開花驢子年), is, therefore, equivalent to our expression, "When three Sundays come in a week."

Another unintelligible prediction, which is credited to the stormy times when the present dynasty was founded, is comprised in the following words: 'Fear not though a herd of tigers should come from the South; but fear the solitary chicken that comes from the North' (不怕南來一羣虎。就怕北來一隻雞). Who or what this terrible bird (a political Dinornis) may be, no one is yet bold enough to hint, but it would not be strange if by some it were identified with the singular feathered monster represented on the Russian standard. The only thing about the prophecy which is clear to the average Chinese, is that it must have been the utterance of a divine person (有神人言) or else why can no one understand it?

Somewhat similar to the dark vaticination of the *Tui Pei Tu*, is the prediction compressed into the five characters, *Mu, Li, Tou, Shih, Tien* (木, 立, 斗, 世, 田), which, by an exegesis essentially Chinese, are made to stretch their inner meaning over a range of about 180 years.

The process is simplicity itself. *Mu* (木), *i.e.*, ten (十) and eight (八), represents the eighteen years of the reign of Shun Chih, the first Emperor of the Tartar Dynasty. He was followed by K'ang Hsi, who reigned sixty-one years, denoted by the *Li* (立) character, *i.e.*, six (六) and one (一). Yung Cheng, who succeeded, reigned thirteen years, signified by *Tou* (斗), *i.e.*, ten (十) and three (三),

Ch'ien Lung, who resigned the throne at the age of sixty, is represented by the *Shih* (世) character, which denotes one age, or cycle of sixty years. The propriety of using the character *T'ien* (田) to typify the reign of Chia Ch'ing, which lasted twenty-five years, must be obvious to the most untutored intellect, when it is considered that twenty-five acres (畝) of land make one *t'ien* (田).

This segment of prophecy, it will be observed, extends only to the end of the reign of Chia Ch'ing, in the year 1821. It was in the two following reigns of Tao Kuang and Hsien Feng, that the need of a clear and precise prediction was most distinctly recognized, for it was then that the pressure of the untamable Barbarian began most to be felt. The Chinese language could afford ample material to furnish forth such prophecies for all the reigns of all the rulers on the planet, to the end of time.

A writer in the *Chinese Recorder* for February, 1871, quotes this so-called prediction, which he supposes to have had its origin with Liu Po Wen (劉伯溫). One or two sayings of this famous man have been already quoted, and there are many more which are widely current and firmly believed, and which are unquestionably ingeniously composed. There is, however, very little evidence of any kind by which to determine whether these alleged prophecies were indited fifty or five hundred years ago.

In the version in the *Recorder*, the last three characters are given as *T'ien* (天), in place of *T'ien* (田) as above, *Hsia* (下), and *Ti* (低).

In Vol. II of Doolittle's *Vocabulary and Handbook* (p. 662) the characters are cited, but no explanation is vouchsafed of the three final ones, which the *Recorder* writer elucidates as follows: *T'ien* (天) indicates the twenty-five years of Chia Ch'ing's reign, because this monarch came originally from one of "twenty-four small heavens," which, with the "large heaven" inhabited by Yü Huang Shang Ti (玉皇上帝) makes just twenty-five! If any one is sceptical as to the real origin of Chia Ch'ing, he is silenced by the convincing proof that he must have come from heaven, or else the *T'ien* character in this prophecy would not have fallen to him!

The *Hsia* (下) character, as we are informed, is interpreted as 一卜三十年. In proof of this we are referred to the *I Ching* but no particular passage is named.



The *Ti* (低) character—referring to *Hsien Feng*—is first analyzed as composed of man (亻) and people (民), and is then explained as meaning “another man”—to wit, Col. Gordon!

The unhappy student of this species of prophecy is first beguiled into pursuing certain shapes called characters, which are pregnant—far too pregnant in fact—with meaning. These characters are constructed like the dipper of a dredging machine, with a swinging door in the bottom. In an instant, and without the least warning, this bottom falls out and all the meaning drops down into the other mud below. What remains is a kind of frame-work (架子) which the prophet (and his pupils) proceed to knock in pieces, and afterwards rearrange (or disarrange) in any shape which may be convenient. When the prophet is wearied of this exercise, a third method is suddenly adopted. The signification of the character is fished up again—and dried—after which an entirely arbitrary categorical relation of this meaning is pitched upon, and the number involved is the number of the object to which the prophecy refers, as in the explanation of the different *t'ien* characters already given.

In connection with what has been said of the *T'ui Pei T'u*, the following circumstance may be of interest, as illustrating the method in which contemporaneous prophecies are hatched and circulated.

In the year 1881 a canal was dug in the region between Tientsin and Pao Ting Fu. In that year it was reported in those cities that in the course of the work a very ancient stone tablet had been exhumed, containing a remarkable inscription, which—apparently without the least evidence of any kind—was popularly assumed to be a relic of Chu Ko Liang (諸葛亮) the great statesman of the time of the Three Kingdoms, often previously mentioned. A copy of this inscription was sent by the writer to the leading daily journal of Shanghai, where it was printed. Two correspondents subsequently furnished translations, principally conspicuous for the circumstance that while they agreed in the translation of five characters (which affirmed that in western Ssu Ch'uan there would be no tiled roofs), they disagreed radically and irreconcilably about all the rest, each one supporting his version by learned notes.

A year and a half later, after one of the inundations caused by a breach in the banks of the Yellow River, an inscription of a similar nature was in circulation in the province of Shantung, several hundred miles from the site of the reputed discovery of the

former one. This later tablet had also been "dug up" in some of the excavations made in repairing the banks of the Yellow River. A copy of this last "find," when compared with the preceding one, was so similar as to leave no doubt of the identity of its origin. A closer examination, however, showed singular discrepancies in several important particulars. 1.—The total number of characters is reduced from eighty to seventy. 2.—Of these seventy characters, twenty-six (or about thirty-seven *per cent.*) are different from those in the version current at Tientsin. Of these twenty-six altered characters, only four resemble in sound the characters for which they are substituted, *Ying Wu* (鸚鵡) and *Ying Wu* (嬰武), *Mi rhu* (迷主) and *Mi chu* (米粥), the difference in meaning in each case being radical. Of the two texts the latter seems to make the better sense, if that were a point of any consequence. 3.—The latter version begins at the seventh line of the former one, and ends at the second line; the third and fourth lines are entirely omitted, and the fifth and sixth placed in different connections. Either one of these four important alterations in the order might vitiate or reverse the sense. 4.—In the last inscription the name of *Liu Chi* (劉基) the same as *Liu Po Wen* (劉伯溫) already mentioned, is appended as the author.

These variations, numerous and important as they are, would seem to have been current when the inscription was first "dug up," for this last edition corresponds well both in order and apparent meaning, to one of the translations noticed above, but other versions current elsewhere differ essentially from either of these.

For the benefit of those who may be curious in matters of this sort, the alleged text of each inscription is subjoined, but it is by no means worth while to waste space in appending conflicting translations. The only value which such inscriptions have for a foreigner, is to set forth in a clear light the following facts.

- 1.—In concocting and disseminating these inscriptions much ingenious industry must have been expended.
- 2.—The appearance of such inscriptions is a phenomenon of constant occurrence at any crisis in the affairs of the government, in times of rebellion; and even when there is no visible exciting cause. The truth is, that such so-called "inscriptions," and other compositions of the sort, tending to excite the popular mind, are put in circulation by the leaders of the various Secret Societies or



Sects, with which the Chinese Empire is honeycombed. Copies are handed about from village to village, and from house to house, and receive a degree of credence which is the offspring of popular ignorance and superstition. Any single phrase of the *soi-disant* "inscription" may be the ambushed signal for some local uprising, or some widespread tumult. These are some of the secret arrows against which it is proverbially hard (even for a despotic government) to guard (暗箭難防).

3.—The great importance attached to such inscriptions is increased, when the names of famous men are affixed as those of the alleged authors.

4.—The account already given makes it obvious that upon the authenticity of these inscriptions not the smallest dependence can be placed.

5.—It is an essential feature of these compositions that they may be interpreted to mean anything whatever. Of this the two following lines will serve as an example: 一字十二點, 價值二十五. These ten characters are interpreted in one of the translations above mentioned, thus: "as to the one character of twelve, the price shall be only twenty-five cash." Lest, however, this perspicuous statement should fail to satisfy some inquiring mind, a helpful foot-note explains that "the character is *Tou* (斗), compounded of *Shih* (十) and *Erh* (二), a measure containing about twelve catties!" The outcome of this line, therefore, is that "twelve catties" of something will on some occasion be sold for "only twenty-five cash."

The other translator, however, explains this to mean that "a single character will have fourteen points or the character *Shih* (十) plus four points, meaning *Mi* (米) rice. His price will be two thousand five hundred (or will be worth 2,500)." But as if this were not sufficiently exact, this writer also helps us out by a friendly foot-note, thus: "The fifth line is possibly to be rendered: The character *Shih* (十) ten, with four points—that is *Mi* (米) rice—will rise to an extravagant price. The rice is predicted in the sixth line." Thus the same lines are variously interpreted—and in each case with equal reason—to predict great plenty and great scarcity.

Text of an Inscription on a Prophetic Tablet dug up in the Province of Chihli, A.D. 1881.

龍蛇刀兵起。誰是誰底主。要得豐好年。四海皆行主。  
一字十二點。價值二十五。幼兒受疆土。情似玉鸚鵡。  
大獅並大兔。元秦黑白虎。大清歸大清。二人坐川土。  
西蜀無瓦蓋。更比漢朝苦。貧窮多歲月。富貴無迷主。

Text of the Inscription on the same Prophetic Tablet as dug up again in the Province of Shantung, A.D. 1883.

幼兒管疆土。恰是此嬰武。大獅並大兔。勝邊黑兒虎。  
一字十四點。價值兩千五。西蜀無瓦蓋。更比漢朝苦。  
貧窮無明。富貴無米粥。大清超大清。二人分疆土。但  
等龍蛇會。你的是真主。大明臣劉基遜立。  
玖月出現。

The influence of so-called prophecies upon a superstitious people like the Chinese is doubtless regarded by the average Anglo Saxon with good-natured contempt. Yet there is often in Western lands much more superstition than is apparent or acknowledged. When in the year 1830, William Henry, Duke of Clarence, was about to succeed his brother George IV. as King of England, the question arose whether he should be proclaimed as Henry IX., the name for which he had a strong preference, or William IV. The King himself is said to be the authority for the statement that when this matter was discussed in the Privy Council, the decision was mainly influenced by an old "prophecy," of which he had never heard before, and of the utterance of which he had no evidence. The drift of the prediction was that as Henry VIII. had "pulled down monks and cells, Henry IX. would pull down bishops and bells."—(Fitzgerald's Life of Geo. IV., vol. 2, ch. xiv., note).

The following Ballad, which has had a wide circulation in some parts of China for an unknown length of time, is a fair specimen of the manner in which historico-prophetical subjects are treated.

下	雨	下	雪。	凍	死	老	鼃。
老	鼃	告	狀。	告	着	和	尙。
和	尙	念	經。	念	着	還	還。
還	還	算	卦。	算	着	蛤	蟆。
蛤	蟆	浮	水。	浮	着	老	鬼。
老	鬼	把	門。	把	着	大	人。
大	人	射	箭。	射	着	老	萬。
老	萬	撞	牙。	撞	了	二	斗 芝 蔴。



## TRANSLATION:

There were rains, there were snows till the Old Turtle froze;  
 The Old Turtle (now deceased) brought a suit against a Priest;  
 Then the Priest, instead of pleading, took his books and fell to reading,  
 And he read, as we opine, of a man that could divine,  
 Who divined about a Frog, floating round like a log;  
 In the water, on a level with the Frog, an Old Devil;  
 The Old Devil at the gates, for the Great Man waits,  
 Who with arrow and with bow, fetches Lao Wan low,  
 Till his teeth grits he two pecks of sesame!

*Notes.*—The first four characters allude to the intestine troubles which heralded the downfall of the Mongol Dynasty in the fourteenth century, which is the point of departure. That the "Old Turtle" really denotes the Mongol Dynasty, is proved by reasoning based on the axiom that quantities which are equal to the same quantity are equal to each other. A "Turtle" (鼈) is also called *Ta Yüan* (大鼈)\* which is the same thing as *Ta Yüan* (大元) the Mongol Dynasty!

The "Old Turtle brought a suit against a priest." This of course means *Chu Yuan Chang* (朱元璋), so often referred to as the Buddhist priest who founded the Ming Dynasty.

The Priest read in his sacred books of a fortune teller. This was *Li Tzu Ch'eng* (李自成), the rebel who helped to overturn the Ming Dynasty, and who, as we have already seen, had only one eye, and was called "Li, the blind man." Fortune tellers are generally blind, and this fixes the identification.

The Frog of which the diviner divined, was the Tartar Dynasty, called *Tu Ch'ing* (大清), the same sounds being also used to indicate a frog, because a frog is green (*Ch'ing* 青)!

The Old Devil who was seen in the water with the Frog, is the Outer Barbarian or Foreign Devil, who, in the days of Tao Kuang (1842), dexterously insinuated himself into the Tartar Frog-pond! As a result of this achievement, the Old Devil became a kind of gate-keeper for the Frog. "Sure enough," cried the Chinese, after

\* These synonyms for the turtle, and the many names of other marine animals, the names of which are written with the same radical, give occasion for the sarcastic couplet: 'Oh Teacher! Teacher! be not vexed because you know not how to write *yüan*, *t'ò*, *pieh*, *wa*, and *tsao*' (先生先生你別惱。你不會寫鼈鼈鼈鼈鼈). The selection of unfamiliar characters with which to "weigh one down," is referred to in the following saying: 竟拿生字壓人。

the occupation of Peking by foreign troops in 1860, and after the establishment of Foreign Legations close to the entrance of the Imperial City, "sure enough! the Old Devil keeps the gates for the Emperor!"

The two remaining couplets refer to events which have not yet taken place, and imitating the discreet silence of Josephus, we will allow them to remain unexplained.

Chinese faith in the prophecies contained in dark sayings, or obtained by the dissection of characters, is not a whit more irrational than the credit given to many of the expositions of the "Number of the Beast" by commentators upon the Apocalypse, expositions deservedly satirized by Macaulay in his reply to a fanatic who approached him on the subject: "Sir," said he, "the House of Commons is the Beast. There are 658 members of the House, and these, with their chief officers, the three clerks, the sergeant and his deputy, the chaplain, the doorkeeper, and the librarian, make 666."

If any one supposes that in this last quarter of the nineteenth century, prophetic vagaries have been superseded, let him examine the deliverances put forth upon similar subjects at the present time, and he will find it difficult to fix upon any particular in which the extravagancies of Occidentals yield to those of Celestials.

In a little work, for example, recapitulating "The Scientific and Religious Discoveries in the Great Pyramid, recently made by Prof. Piazzzi Smith, and other noted scholars," we find such cogent reasoning as the following: "The measured length of the floor line from the north wall of the Grand Gallery . . . up to the present north end of the latter, equals 2527.1 inches. The  $2527.1 + 55.568$  (or about the average width of the floor stones), equals 2582.688 or the 'precessional dial' (an important feature in Great Pyramid chronology) divided by ten." "Again,  $2582.688 + 206.066$  (King's Chamber width), equals 2788.734," *therefore* the deluge is determined to have been about 2,789 years after the creation!

"The precessional dial 582.688 divided by 25 (because the sacred cubit contains 25 inches!) equals 1033.0672; *the excess over 1,000* comprising probably the exact length of the voluntary life of humiliation in the flesh of our Saviour, Jesus the Anointed; or 33 years, 24 days, 13 hours." [It will be seen to be a very necessary part of "Great Pyramid chronology" to know exactly when to



subtract from a certain number of square inches, in such a way as to leave a remainder in years, days, and hours.]

Should any one be fatuous enough to question results of such mathematical certainty as these, he is at once confounded by the discovery that the length of the antechamber, 116.26, less 83.1925, *the hypotenuse of the step which leads to the antechamber (!)*, equals 33.0675, practically the same as the above! Once more, 33.0675 [a quantity slightly altered from the preceding, for reasons connected with "Great Pyramid chronology"], *multiplied by six* [perhaps on account of the "six" days of creation] equals the time from the death of Jacob (a type of Christ), to the Exodus from Egypt! In our opinion, the Pyramid prophet is able at any time to meet the Chinese prophet, give him heavy odds, and then vanquish him utterly.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *Conclusion.*

#### ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE ORIGIN, GROWTH, AND DIFFICULTIES OF CHINESE PROVERBS.

Some preliminary observations have been previously made on the comprehension (and translation) of Chinese Proverbs. The numerous specimens of proverbs of different classes which have been cited, will have served still further to exhibit the not infrequent difficulty of fully comprehending them. In view, however, of the capital importance of such comprehension to every one who tries to understand the Chinese spoken language, it may be well in closing our review of Chinese Proverbs, to return to the subject with still further illustration.

To make the matter as clear as possible, we will first take a single word, giving specimens of phrases and sentences in which it occurs with different shades of meaning. In the selection of a word, we can scarcely go amiss; as the precocious lad Hsiang T'o said to Confucius, let us take that which is immediately before us, to wit, the Eye character (眼).

First, direct use, that is, the Eye as a part of the physiognomy, or as the organ of vision. 柳眉杏眼, 'Willow eyebrows and almond eye,' characteristics of feminine beauty. 靈眉大眼, 'Intelligent eyebrows and large eyes.' 睨眼看鵝蛋, 'Looking askance at an egg,' i.e., to see which of two is the larger. 擠鼻子弄眼, 'Twitching the nose, and working the eyes,' the behavior of children when they dare not speak, but make covert signs. 喜眉笑眼, 'Glad eye-brows and laughing eyes.' 吵鬧嘔眼, "Angry disputes and protuberant eyes," the preliminary symptoms of a fight.

In these last phrases, a new meaning begins to creep in, to wit the Eye as an index of the feeling, temper, disposition, or character. 仇人見面, 分外眼紅, 'When enemies meet face to face, their eyes are very red, i.e., with mutual hatred. 賊眉鼠眼白眼狼抗人的賊



'A thief's eyebrows, and a rat's eyes; A white eyed wolf; a thief who leads others into pitfalls,' of one crafty and wicked. 豹頭虎眼, 'A leopard's head and a tiger's eyes'—a man imposing, brave, fierce, like Chang Fei. 提眉吊眼, 'Raising the eyebrows and dropping the eye,'—like bullies, who wish to look as awe inspiring as possible. (So also: 好大眼眶子, 不認的人, 'Large eye-sockets—not knowing any one,' i.e., feeling above others.) 目中無人虛氣假瞪眼, 'Looking down on others an insincere aspect, an affected stare.' 兩個人同心, 擠眼, 'Two persons winking at each other as a sign of agreement.' 馬快見賊對了眼子, 'A thief-taker and a thief meeting, eye to eye.' The head constables are thieves who have retired from business, and have been promoted. Used of recognition of the qualities of a thing, by experts, or of things which exactly suit. 閉眉合眼, 'Contracted eyebrows and closed eyes,' of any one in the depths of poverty, or in bad luck. 翻白眼, 'To roll the whites of one's eyes,' to be stupid, or to pretend to be so. 耗子落在面缸裏, 只乘翻白眼哩, 'A rat fallen into a flour jar; nothing to do but roll his white eyes,' said of one who through stupidity or inadvertence has been cheated of everything, and who can only show the whites of his eyes. 睜眉都露眼, 'Wrinkling eyebrows, and bulging eyes,' affectation of stupidity—pretending not to know one. 兩眼模糊的, 不認的人, 'Both eyes dim, not recognizing any one'—similar to the last.

'A mean fellow who does not open his eyes,' that is who does not see what he ought to see, who will not spend money when he ought to spend it, etc. 早晨打模糊眼, 'Eyes not seeing distinctly in the early morning,' used figuratively of one who tries to hoodwink others. 不睜開眼, 'Not to open one's eyes,' of one who takes no account of circumstances. 別作那個睜眼的大漏事, 'Do not go on so with your eyes wide open, and do what will be sure to be found out.' 不知眉眼高低, 'Never knowing whether the eyebrows and eyes of others are high or low,' same as the last. 眼兒眇不可塞牙, 'Matter in the eyes, gets nothing between the teeth.' 眼見活見的, "I saw it myself," or, in the language of a witness in court, "I seed it with my own blessed eyes." Said for example of anything which was definitely settled, and then reopened and unsettled. 何必在此, 吃下眼食, 'Why should you stay here and eat food under other's eyes?' The phrase

eat under-eyes-food" signifies eating at the expense of another, who watches every mouthful with jealousy. 必須摘下他的眼罩兒來, 'The blinders must be taken off from his eyes.' 放開眼界看事, 立定腳根爲人, 'Open your eyes wide so as to take in a broad range of vision; stand firmly on your heels, and be a man.' 殺人不展眼的魔君, 'To kill a man without winking, a prince of devils,' said of one expert in wickedness. 餓藍了眼, 'Starved till the eye turns blue.' So also: 死羊頭, 藍了眼, 'A dead sheep's head, the eye turned blue.' Of one in extreme distress—even the black pigment of the eye has faded.

In a large class of expressions the word Eye is used to denote anything which resembles an eye—an opening, a hole. 無故混挑眼, 'Unreasonable and reckless picking of holes,'—fault finding. 雨過天晴, 有道眼 'When the rain is over, and the weather clear, there is a road eye.' This 'road-eye' is the narrow path which is gradually opened in the mud of a Chinese street after a rain. 坐錢邊摸錢眼, 'Sitting on the edge of a cash, feeling for the hole.' This is said of a very stingy man who never gets enough, and who is always niggardly to others.

The expression Heart-eye (心眼) is one of the most frequent of this class, signifying intelligence, forethought, plan. 馱子無心眼, 'A stupid man has no eyes in his heart,'—the seven openings (七竅) are plugged up, or wanting. 你是處處小心眼兒, 'You in everything have small heart-eyes,' that is "You have hardly any sense."

The word Eye is often employed to denote that which is gained by the use of eyes—observation, prevision. 留下一个人, 作个撥眼兒的, 'Leaving one man for an eye-clearer.' The supposition is that a number of persons are in league, as, for example, servants to defraud their master. Lest their misdoings come to light, one is stationed as a spy, to clear their vision for them, acting as their eye. 前船是後船眼, 'The boat in front is an eye to the boat behind.\*' 後悔沒後眼, 'After-regrets (repentance) but no after-eyes,' i.e., he is sorry enough for his mistake, but he still has no eye to the future (沒有往後看的眼力)

\* This expression reminds one of the familiar story of the Chinese, who when asked by a foreigner the use of the great eyes carved or painted on the prows of junks, replied: "Suppose no have got eyes, how can make see walk?" In confirmation of this view, it may be mentioned that the large warts found on the legs of horses, donkeys, etc., are colloquially called by the Chinese, "night-eyes," and it is popularly believed that without such luminaries these animals would not be able to find their way in the dark!



Still different is the use of the word Eye in such phrases as the following: 酸文加醋, 咬字眼, 'To add vinegar to sour literary composition; to gnaw character eyes' (expressions). Said of one who pretends to be a scholar, but who has no learning.

There is, perhaps, nothing particularly unintelligible about any of the phrases and sentences thus far quoted. The depressing circumstance is that it would not be difficult to cite fifty or possibly five hundred more such examples of the use of this same word Eye. When it is considered that every Chinese symbol has its own 'character-eyes,' the prospect is at least expansive.

鋼眼裏拔出來的手, 'This fellow has been pulled through an eye in the steel.' The allusion is to iron wire, which is made by drawing it through apertures in a steel draw-plate. The meaning is, that he is a small pattern of a man—stingy, "wiredrawn." 做事說話, 沒板眼, 'Whether acting or speaking, no eye in the board.' In this phrase the word Eye is employed to denote intelligence, and this is assumed as a characteristic not of the performer, but of his tools. The 'board' (板) is a sort of castanet used by theatrical performers. The phrase 'board eye' (板眼) does not mean that there is an eye in the strip of bamboo referred to, but that the use of the castanets is in accordance with rule.

一板三眼科來的, 'One board three eyes; only acquired by long practice.' Theatrical performers are sometimes educated as such from boyhood, and sometimes they take up this employment in middle life. Only the former class understand all the secrets of the craft. The saying means that he has learned his art from a recognized master, that he makes no mistakes.

In like manner the phrase *chia huo yen* (傢伙眼), 'eye of the implement,' signifies that a tool or instrument of any kind is used as it ought to be used—as a trumpet in a band of music, etc.

錢有眼, 穀有鼻, 飛來飛去無定地, 'Each separate cash, it has an Eye, each millet grain a Nose, and each of them flies back and forth, uncertain where it goes.' This means that the 'eye' of the cash, and the imaginary 'nose' of the grain enable them to find their way about the world, lodging only with those who are able to welcome them—that is, those who have the means with which to procure them.

The difficulty of comprehending a Chinese proverb, on a first hearing, is often due to the use of a word or a phrase to represent

other words, which are suppressed. To the Chinese themselves there is no ambiguity, but to the foreigner such expressions frequently prove insoluble riddles. Words and phrases are also constantly used in a sense which does not readily suggest itself at a first hearing.

The following proverbs illustrate ambiguities of these and similar varieties. 能打私鹽槽米, 不打人命干連. The expression *ta yu* (打油) signifies to 'buy oil,' but 'ta yen' (打鹽) does not denote buying anything, but stands for *ta kuan ssu* (打官司) that is, to be concerned in a law suit about smuggled salt, or grain taxes. The meaning is that such a prosecution at the worst will only involve a limited and temporary punishment, while to be involved in a murder case (人命案), even as a witness only, may result in a detention of an indefinite number of years.

買瓜買茄, 要讓他个老咧. Here the last clause does not mean, as might be supposed, that in buying melons and egg-plants, one should give a cash more (一个老錢), but that one should let the matter go, because the individual is an *old man*. The saying is used to persuade people to desist from quarreling.

以老賣老的. This means that an old man presumes on his being an old man, to do as he pleases, irrespective of right or wrong (以老爲理).

錢大, 買錢二麼. In this phrase *ch'ien* (錢), money, is spoken of as if it were a surname (which is sometimes the case): 'Will Ch'ien the elder buy out Ch'ien the younger?' The meaning is that he who has most means will win. 'The longest pole knocks off the persimmon.' Or it may be used satirically in a sense exactly opposite, as for example by a dealer who demands an extravagant price for his early fruit. A rich man offers him less than he asks, but the vender coolly eats the fruit himself, remarking: 'Can Ch'ien the elder buy out Ch'ien the younger?' as much as to say, "You may have more money than I, but you cannot control me."

A somewhat similar mode of expression occurs in the saying: 天是王大, 你就是王二, 'Heaven is the great king, and you, to be sure, are king number two.' This is a sarcastic recognition of the pretensions of one who arrogates much to himself: 'You are right; no one is superior to you but Heaven, and you and Heaven are brothers!'



大雞蛋擺在頭上，嚇的他抖衣而戰，‘A great hen's egg fixed on the head, to terrify one so that he will tremble till his clothes shake.’ The ‘great hen's egg’ is the mandarin's button, worn on the crown of the head, and the meaning is that he who is able to wear it will frighten others by awe of his prestige.

扁擔光棍佔一溜，豆腐光棍佔一方。

‘A carrying-pole bully occupies a strip; a bean-curd bully occupies a square.’ In this not too perspicuous saying, the words ‘carrying pole,’ and ‘bean-curd,’ are used as adjectives, and then transferred from the region—of which they are the proper qualifiers—to the individual who occupies the region. The meaning is that one bully domineers over a long line of territory, as, for example, a highway between one city and another, and from the resemblance of this long and narrow strip to a pole, he is called a ‘carrying-pole bully.’ By a similar idiom, a long, thin village, with but a single street, is called a ‘carrying-pole village.’ Bean-curd is made into small square cakes, which, when dried, are called *tou-fu kan'rh* (豆腐乾)\* The word ‘bean-curd’ refers to cakes of this sort, and intimates that the area domineered by the local bully, who is unknown at a distance, is *square*.

In the following example, the names of metals are used as adjectives, as when we speak of the “golden age,” the “silver age,” etc. 金石溝，銀勝芳，鉄打卓勾莊，不及信安一後晌。Golden Shih Kou; silver Sheng Fang; iron Cho Kou Chuang; but none of them equal an afternoon in Hsin An.’ The places named are in northern Chihli, but their relative wealth and importance are said to be incorrectly delineated in this proverb.

賊使非智，官動非刑。This does not mean that what the thief employs is ‘not skill,’ nor that what the magistrate resorts to is ‘not punishment,’ but that when the thief has recourse to extraordinary (非常的) skill, the magistrate meets it by the use of punishment of unexampled severity.

家中沒有二畝白沙地，我賠墊不起，‘I have no two acres of light sandy land, and I cannot make up the loss.’ Here

\* These bean-curd cakes, which somewhat resemble a cake of boiled soap, being about three inches square and half an inch thick, are used as a standard of insignificance, as in the saying: “如同三塊豆腐乾子，那麼高的人兒，a man of the size of three pieces of bean-curd cakes.” This means that he is insignificant in stature, “nothing to look at,” and has no “gall-bladder,” besides being generally useless.

the phrase 'two acres' (二畝) which one might suppose would represent a very trifling estate—"the least as is,"—is used as the representation of a competence. "I am not rich, and I cannot afford it." The light sandy soil (白沙地) is supposed to be of the best—bearing a full crop both in wet years and in dry.

A similar use of language occurs in the proverb: 家有三畝田, 不離縣門前, 'Those who have three acres of land never leave the door of the Yamên,' *i.e.*, those who have a sure income, can afford to go to law.

In the following saying a small but definite quantity of land is mentioned, to suggest insignificance of area: 你只在這一畝三分地上, 豪橫, 'You just stand on your one acre and three-tenths of an acre, and practice bullying.' This means that one who has no proper qualifications in boldness and skill, sets himself up as a bully, but nobody fears him, and he can only play the tyrant on his own little patch of ground.

偷雨不偷雪, 偷風不偷月. This does not mean that one can 'steal the rain' and 'steal the wind' (偷雨偷風) although he cannot 'steal the snow and the moon' (不偷雪, 不偷月), but that when there is snow on the ground, or when the moon shines, there is danger of detection, but not in time of rain and wind (so Mr. Scarborough, No. 1809).

要宜麥見三白. The word 'three' (三) refers to the *third nine* (三九) after the winter solstice, previously explained. If in this third nine, white (snow 雪) falls, the next crop of wheat will be a good one.

能走凍河一寸, 不走開河一尺. This seems to affirm that one might go an inch on a frozen river, but must not go a foot when the ice is thawing—which, of course, is nonsense. The measurements are not horizontal, but perpendicular. 'If the river is frozen, you may venture on it, although the ice is but an inch in thickness; but when the spring thaw begins, you must not go on it at all, though the ice should be a foot thick.'

鐵到了釘, 人到了兵, 小孩子到了賣燒餅. The phrase *tao liao* (到了) here means 'reduced to its last estate—at its worst.' (好人不當兵, 好鐵不捻釘, 'Good men do not become soldiers, good iron is not wrought into nails.') When a man is at the end of his resources, and can in no other way get a living, he becomes a soldier; a lad who is good for nothing else can at least sell bread cakes.



輕易莫許人，許死人，想死人。 The first clause evidently means, "Do not lightly make promises." But what of the second clause? A foreigner to whom it was submitted for a conjectural explanation, observed upon reflection that it looked as if it *ought* to mean: 'If you promise to have a man die, remember and kill him.' The word *ssu* (死) is here used as an adverb, to indicate what cannot be altered. 'If you have made an irrevocable promise, be sure and execute it'.

In the following sentence the words *yu hsin wei shan* (有心爲善) might, at a first hearing, be mistaken to mean: 'If one has a heart which is good,' but the second clause would serve to correct the misapprehension: 有心爲善，雖善不賞，無心爲惡，雖惡不罰。 The meaning is that rewards and punishments are not determined by the outward act. 'He who does what is virtuous, and does it of set purpose ("to be seen of men,") will not be rewarded, although his act was virtuous; he who without a set purpose committed wickedness, may not be punished for the wickedness which he did.'

The following saying appears to mean, 'Eating porridge again out of the old boiler,' 又吃舊鍋裏的粥, but it refers simply to one who returns to his old trade, which he had for a time abandoned. The words 'old boiler' are figuratively used for 'former means of support.'

竟擎老公分子, 'Simply taking the share belonging to a eunuch.' 由着老公賞, 'To accept the reward of a eunuch.' These expressions are said of one who is taking what is given him, without asking for more. The words *lao kung* (老公) ordinarily applied to eunuchs, are ambiguous. In this connection they may mean not 'a eunuch,' but 'you, sir.' 'I will take whatever you choose to give.' (It would be strange if there were not some uncertainty connected with two sayings of this sort, since no one in China ever has any occasion to use them.)

The phrase *sheng-i* (生意) is used in general of trade, or in a more restricted sense of fortune tellers, conjurers, physiognomists, etc., as in the following sayings: 醫卜星相分生意儒流, "Medicine, fortune-telling, astrology, physiognomy, are taken up as a trade or practised (for diversion) by scholars; the latter only is respectable."

生意人的口，不怕胡說，只怕無說。 'The mouth of the *sheng-i* practitioner is not afraid of talking recklessly, but of not having the opportunity to talk at all.'

乾坤皆生意, 'The whole universe is nothing but *sheng-i*.'

In the following couplet from *the Yung Hsing Pien* (庸行篇) the phrase has no such signification: 常覺胸中生意滿, 須知世上苦人多, 'He in whose breast all desires are fulfilled should be aware that the wretched are in this world numerous.'

The frequent inversion of subject and predicate in Chinese sentences leads to embarrassing ambiguity. For instance, the phrase *Hai tzu hsi huan jen* (孩子喜歡人) may signify that the child gives pleasure to others—not that he likes them himself.

So likewise the word *ch'üan* (勸) means to exhort, and *ta hai tzu* (打孩子) means to beat a child, but *ch'üan jen ta hai tzu* (勸人打孩子) means to exhort a person to stop beating a child.

Man can be imposed upon, but heaven cannot be imposed upon; man can be deceived, heaven cannot be deceived (人可欺, 天不能欺, 人可瞞, 天不能瞞).

"When one is virtuous other men will impose on him, heaven will not impose on him; when one is wicked men fear him, heaven does not fear him" (人善人欺, 天不欺, 人惡人怕, 天不怕). Here the words *t'ien pu ch'i* (天不欺) mean (actively) that heaven does not impose on man, and (passively) that heaven cannot be imposed on by man.

Some Chinese sayings, while not difficult of comprehension, are hard to explain, because lacking in one of the three fundamental qualities of a proverb, to wit, *sense*.

兔死狐悲, 物傷其類. "The hare dies, and the fox mourns,—animals grieve over their kind."

When we are told that "One good man is attached to another, monkeys love monkeys" (好漢愛好漢, 猩猩惜猩猩), this is intelligible.

When we hear that 'The cat weeps over the death of the rat, but it is false sympathy' (貓哭耗子假慈悲), we feel that this is reasonable.

But to say that the grief of the fox over the death of the hare is an instance of animals sympathizing with their "kind" is to an occidental—though not to a Chinese—absurd. The saying is used, for instance, of a soldier, who seeing a comrade killed realizes how dangerous is his situation; or of a yamen follower beaten, who thus serves as a warning to his fellows against malpractices.



It is thus similar to the proverb: 打了驢子, 馬也驚, "Beat the mule, and terrify the horse as well."

But in all such uses, the irrational linking of animals which, except that both are mammals and both are wild, are plainly not of a kind, is still left unexplained.

An intelligent teacher whose attention was invited to this solecism suggested that it might mean: "If the fox mourns for the hare which is *not* of his kind, how much more should those who *are* of a kind sympathize." But when it was very naturally objected that such an idea is not only not contained in the proverb, but flatly contradicts it, he not inaptly replied: "Then you must go and inquire of the man who invented this saying, what he meant by it!" "Do you suppose," said another, "that everything that is said has sense in it?" (話都有情理嗎).

有衣的多寒, 無衣的少寒. "He who wears (more) clothes, is colder; he who wears no (*i.e.*, fewer) clothes, is less cold." This reminds one of a syllogism cited in Whateley's *Logic*, as follows: "He who is most hungry eats most; he who eats least is most hungry: therefore, he who eats least, eats most." The Chinese paradox, however, is not to be solved by being shown to be a 'quadruped,' yet the explanation is simplicity itself. He who suffers cold, and is able to put on more garments, does so; yet, as he is still cold, he is obliged again to put on more garments, which process is perpetually repeated. Thus he becomes enervated while the man who has no more clothes to put on becomes hardy and really suffers "less cold" (少寒) than the other.

In some parts of the United States the slang phrase 'one horse' is used to express incompleteness or inferiority, as a "one horse town," a "one horse newspaper," etc. The antithetical expression "a whole team," indicates that the equipment is complete.

A hard-headed farmer, who wished to express his sense of the capacities of Gen. Grant, remarked that he was "none of your one horse generals, but a whole team with a colt behind and a big dog and a tar-bucket under the wagon!"

This kind of 'ornamental language' (觀言) consisting of words added simply to heighten by amplification the force of an expression, is found in Chinese. 他肚子裏, 也有个三化五化, 大麻花兒的, "He is one of those who have within themselves three transformations, and even five of them,—and a great doughnut

besides." The phrase *san hua* (三化) and *wu hua* (五化) are intended to suggest resources, as for instance that of *Sun wu k'ung* in the *Hsi Yu Chi*, who, when hard pressed, turned himself into a temple, and his tail became the flag-staff in front! The phrase "great doughnut" (大麻花) is an 'ornamental appendage' suggested by the word *hua*.

公雞頭, 母雞頭, 不在這頭, 在那頭, 'The head of a cock, and the head of a hen; if not at this head then at that head.' Here the "cock" and the "hen" have nothing whatever to do with the meaning, and are merely used to suggest two different 'heads,' or ends. Thus a courier will get his money either from the 'cock's head' or from the 'hen's head,' that is, if not paid at one end of the route, he must be paid at the other end.

五脊六獸, 好難受, 'The six varieties of animals on the five ridges of the roof,—very hard to bear.' This is another specimen of 'ornamental language.' The mention of the strange marine monsters found on the roofs of Chinese temples, etc., animals which are compendiously called *liu shou* (六獸), although there are nine or more kinds, suggests another kind of *shou*, to wit, *nan shou* (難受). The saying is used of anything of a particularly 'bitter' or intolerable character (好難受).

Children—to whom the misuse of words appears to afford peculiar delight—frequently pass through a state of murdering the King's English, as by inquiring whether one voted the "Tig Whicket"; has ever ridden in a "Waggage Bagon," or kept a 'Shopecary Pop,' etc.

Or the result may be unintentional as when the orator exclaimed: "Who has not cherished a half-warmed fish in his heart?"

It would scarcely be expected that a sober people like the Chinese would indulge in this form of pleasantry, yet such is the case.

'In everything,' says the proverb, 'right should be regarded, and not men' (凡事向理不向人), i.e., 'If you favor a man, go not beyond what is right' (向人向不過理去). The inhabitants of a certain Chinese city (which it would be invidious to mention) have a more excellent (because a more consistent and honest) mode of expression. 'Always,' say they, 'regard the person, and never mind the right of the thing' (凡事向人不向理).



'To pour out the tea, and cut the water-melon' (倒茶切瓜) is an expression for the rites of ordinary hospitality. It is often varied by saying: 'Slice the tea, and pour out the water-melon' (切茶倒瓜).

'To carry wine and to lead a sheep' (擔酒牽羊) is an expression denoting entertainment of guests on a scale which leaves no doubt of one's sincerity. But of the man whose hospitality is "all talk and no cider" (大題小作) it is sometimes said that he comes 'Leading the wine and carrying his sheep' (牽酒擔羊), i.e., his acts are a mere pretence.

The phrase 'carved in wood and moulded in mud' (木雕泥塑的) is in common use to denote the construction of idols. In the following expression the terms are reversed, to indicate a person who is neither one thing nor another, or, as we should say, "Neither fish, flesh, nor fowl." 'He has become a mud-carved, wood-moulded kind of a man' (成了个泥雕, 木塑的人).

The structure of the Chinese language is such that the relation between words which in Western languages are expressed with extreme precision by prepositions, is in the former language often left obscure or at best not indicated. 氣恨人家有, 笑人家無 'Angry at others who have an abundance; contemptuous toward those who have not enough.'

The uncertainty as to the meaning of a Chinese phrase is frequently due to the use of descriptions or allusions in place of the subjects and predicates which the description or allusion is intended to suggest. 站着的房子, 躺着的地, 'Standing houses, and land lying down.' Here the reader naturally inquires how 'standing houses' differ from ordinary houses, and what is the peculiarity of 'land lying down.' The meaning is simply *many* buildings, and *much* territory.

浮橋倉裏, 有他一分, 'In the hold of the floating bridge he has an interest.' The compartments of the old boats which constitute the floating bridges, are preempted by beggars for their dwelling. The expression signifies that he is one who will come to the 'floating bridge,' that is, to poverty, at last.

沒齒不忘大恩, 'No teeth, and not forgetting great kindness received,' where 'no teeth' is put by metonymy for extreme age—that is, perpetual remembrance.

手上戴帽子, 胳膊上穿套子, 白日在人後, 夜間人前走, 站破方磚, 倚着明柱, 'A cap on the hand, a suit of clothes

on the arm, going behind by daylight and in front at night, standing on a broken brick, and leaning against a pillar.' This is a description of a servant, who holds his master's cap in his hand, and his master's clothes on his shoulder, follows him by day, lights his way before him at night, standing when his master sits. It is substantially a riddle.

In the following example, the first line explains the riddle in the second line. 趕車的拿起鞭子, 頂着个二年半的徒罪, 前面似沒爪牙的虎, 後邊似滾木雷石, 'The carter takes his whip, and incurs a punishment of two years and a half of exile: in front there is, as it were, a tiger without claws, and behind, as it were, a rolling wood, and a thundering stone.'

This figurative description does not exaggerate the dangers of Chinese crowded thoroughfares, where a moment's slip may result in running over a person, leading to the banishment of the carter. The 'clawless tiger' is the dangerous horse, and the 'rolling wood and thundering stone' are the cart and its wheels.

In many proverbial expressions the reason upon which a proposition depends for its justification is neither expressed nor hinted. Two entirely independent clauses are often yoked together, with no predicate whatever, and the hearer—or reader—is left to conjecture a point of connection between them. 說書的嘴, 唱戲的腿, 'A story-teller's mouth, a play-actor's legs,' i.e., expert, able to surpass others in lying and in dancing.

The analogy so often noticed in the discussion of the subject of Chinese foot-binding, between this practice and the occidental habit of tight-lacing, has been expressed in a double phrase of this sort: 中國腳, 西國腰, 'A Chinese foot, a foreign waist,'—each tightly compressed.

南斗北秤, 'The southern bushel, the northern steel-yard.' This means that the southern measures are larger than those in the north, while the northern weight is heavier than the southern; or it might denote in either case a nearer approach to an ideal standard.

事不着急, 棒不打腿. This saying is in constant use by people who have no idea how it is to be explained. The most natural explanation appears to be: 'If you do not get too much excited over any matter (so as to commit some act for which you become liable to be prosecuted), you will not get beaten.'



在京的和尙,出京的官, 'A Buddhist priest in Peking, a magistrate out of Peking.' In Peking, where there is so much business in their line, priests are rich; but the officials are so numerous that few of them can get good employment. A priest and magistrate who leave Peking, change their condition—the one for the worse, the other for the better.

匠人不偷,莊稼不收. This means that those who work at trades always steal; if they should neglect to do so, it would be as if a year occurred in which the crops failed—that is, their stealings are as uniform a source of income as his crop to a farmer.

Another version, but with the same meaning, is given by Mr. Scarborough (No. 313), 銀匠不偷銀, 餓死一家人, 裁縫不偷布, 婦人莫得褲, 'If silversmiths were to give up stealing silver, they would starve to death their whole family; if tailors were to stop stealing cloth, their wives would have no material for trowsers.'

The saying quoted above may also be interpreted to signify that artisans say that they never steal anything, just as farmers always pretend that the crops were a failure; that is to say, workmen always steal, and farmers always lie.

藝人難富, 'It is hard for craftsmen to get rich.' This saying is regarded as a confirmation of the preceding. In commenting upon it, a Chinese teacher observed: 'Handicraftsmen have no conscience; they are all expert thieves, and besides, they dawdle over their work (磨工夫), therefore heaven does not suffer them to grow rich.'

In support of the last specification against skilled workmen may be cited another proverb: 皮匠人慢工夫, 'Shoemakers-slow work.' Whoever has had occasion to employ Chinese artificers of any kind, will bear cheerful witness to the accuracy of this charge as applied to all classes of them.

賣倭瓜, 托大坯的事由, 'A business like selling Japanese squashes, and molding large mud bricks.' These squashes are excessively heavy for their bulk, and bring a small price. The man who deals in them has to do very hard work for very small profits. The same is true of molding adobe bricks.

指穀借米, 'Pointing to millet to borrow rice.' The 'millet' is supposed to be a crop not yet ripe, and its owner points to it, as

proof that he will be able to repay the rice which he wishes to borrow.

離地三尺, 不是神, 也是仙, 'Three feet from the ground; if not a god he is at least a fairy.' This refers not to the gods (or spirits) which are said to be 'three feet' above the heads of men (頭上三尺有神靈) but to one who can afford to ride, either on horseback, in a cart, or in a sedan chair, 'three feet from the ground.' Such an one is supposed to be perfectly happy and at his ease (自由自在).

不會不散. This expression might be taken to mean, 'Not meeting and not dispersing,' like isolated clouds not far apart, and still not concentrated. This would conform to the analogy of phrases like *pu leng pu je* (不冷不熱) 'not cold and not hot.' The true meaning is, however, altogether different, and is found by putting the words into the subjunctive mood. If two persons have an appointment, who ever first arrives will wait for the other, for whatever length of time. Neither will retire until the meeting has been accomplished.

頭伏澆, 二伏燒. This means not that the first decade of the dog-days (頭伏) certainly *will be* 'moist,' and the second decade 'roasting hot,' but that *if* the first ten days are rainy, the second ten days will be burning ones.

能買不值, 不買吃食, 'One may buy what is not worth its price, but must not buy food.' This means that an article which was bought too dear is still on hand, but if one spends his money for eatables he has nothing whatever to show for it.

抬頭的男家, 低頭的女家, 'The husband's family raises its head, the wife's family drops its head.' The family of the husband should be superior in wealth, prestige, etc., to that of the wife,—should hold its head higher.

看三國, 頑鳥鎗, 下象棋, 辦銀行, 'Reading the *Three Kingdoms*; shooting birds; playing chess; managing a shop where sycee silver is sold.' The explanation of this proverb is found in the phrase *ssu ta chüeh* (四大決), the four conditions in which matters are pressed to extremities.

In the *Three Kingdoms* strategy wins, without which war is impossible (兵不厭詐). The object is to annihilate the enemy. In bird hunting and in chess playing, sympathy has no place, and



the same is true (as the reader has doubtless discovered for himself) of Chinese money shops.

早賣開張, 晚賣收市, 'Early sales opening the accounts; late sales closing the shop.' This refers to the practice of shop-keepers, whose morals are apparently not better than those of the mechanics and farmers, to whom reference was just made. The customer is deluded into buying an article, if it is early, on pretence that as they are just beginning business for the day, the dealers do not mind a little reduction from the regular price. Towards night alleged discount is given because they are just shutting up.

打殺臭塊地, 'Kill him, and make a piece of ground give out a bad smell,' that is, these consequences are the *only* ones that follow, and afford the only reason for not killing him; as a tender hearted railway engineer observed, that he hated to run over a man, because it "mussed up the track so."

拾來麥子, 鬼推礮, 'Picked up wheat, and a devil turned the mill.' This is a street call of the vendors of eatables, which is used proverbially to indicate a double advantage, like that gained by gleaning other people's wheat, and having it ground for nothing by a 'devil.'

一個人吃飯, 一家不餓, 'One man eats enough, and no one of the family is hungry.' He is the *only* member of his family—he has no 'family.'

一人不入廟, 二人不看井, 'One person alone should not enter a temple, two persons should not together look into a well.'

This not very intelligible dictum means that he who enters a temple will probably find the priests engaged in some disreputable business, which they cannot afford to have known, and so they will kill their visitor to prevent the story from spreading.\* The second line is likewise cautionary. If one of the men *owes* the other money which he cannot pay, or a grudge which he would like to pay, or if one has become enamored of the other's wife, they would

\* This significant saying is reinforced by another proverb, which runs thus: 殺人的和尚, 滅人的僧, 'Killing people and exterminating individuals, that is Buddhist priests.' Nuns are not supposed to be much better than priests, 好人的女兒, 不上姑子廟裏送去, 'The daughters of a respectable family should not be sent into a temple where there are nuns.' 十个姑子九个娼, 下餘一个是瘋狂, 'Ten female priests and nine are bad, The odd one left is doubtless mad.'

do well to avoid going together to the edge of a well, for one of them would be sure to push the other in!

'One man, one horse, one spear' (一人一馬一條鎗) the rest of the army all gone; of one with no parents, brothers or wife—single, solitary

'When a man goes, luck; when a horse goes, fat' (人走時運, 馬走膘) That is, good fortune is as necessary for the permanent success of a man, as a good coating of flesh is necessary for a horse on a journey.

In the following sentence the first five characters may be regarded as adjectives, the last five as verbs. They constitute a compendious description of a bad man: 奸巧 劬滑 壞, 尋 縫 拐 騙 坑. 'Unprincipled, intriguing, niggardly, crafty, base; to beg, to buy without paying, to swindle, to defraud, to entrap others.'

五年, 六月, 七日, 八時, 'Five years, six months, seven days, eight hours.' Here the numbers represent decades of one's life. At fifty, a person's strength visibly declines from one year to another; at sixty this change is perceptible from month to month; at seventy it is seen from day to day, and at eighty from hour to hour.

In English proverbs, puns are of very infrequent occurrence, as compared with those to be met in Chinese. When, therefore, puns do occur in English proverbs, the pun is very likely to be lost sight of altogether.

An excellent example is found in the saying: "He will never set the Thames on fire." The *temse* was a kind of sieve which might be shaken over the frame which supported it, so rapidly as to set the sieve itself on fire, but in the case of an idle workman, whose motions were slow, this would never happen—he would not "set the temse on fire."

This simple—and undoubtedly correct—explanation has been repeatedly given in books of Notes and Queries, etc., and is ever and anon met with in periodical literature, but probably ninety-nine out of a hundred persons who repeat the saying, think of it—if indeed they think anything about it—as a mere hyperbole,—in other words the sieve (*temse*) is drowned in the river (Thames).

In Chinese, where puns are constantly to be expected—and in a country where sieves do not so readily become obsolete—this



result is not so likely to take place, yet it is probable that homophony, to which puns owe their existence, does at times lead to the misapprehension of proverbs.\*

Several instances of this have been already incidentally quoted, and the following is perhaps an additional example: 春冷凍死牛, 'Spring cold will freeze an ox.' This would naturally be taken for a hyperbole—like that involved in setting fire to the Thames—but it is also explained as an homophonous error.

One of the fables of Æsop refers to a foolish and dissipated young man, who inferred from the appearance of a single swallow, that spring had come. He accordingly pawned his winter clothing gambled away the proceeds, caught a violent cold, and, like the untimely swallow, died. 春冷凍死忸, 'Spring cold will freeze the perverse.'

A very common metaphor in Chinese is, "A frog in a well," indicating utter inexperience and ignorance. 夏虫不可以語冰。井蛙不可以談天, 'The summer insect cannot speak of ice; the frog in the bottom of a well should not talk of the heavens.' 井底蛙, 沒見大天日, 'Like a frog in the bottom of a well; never having seen much of the heavens, nor of the sun.'

There is some reason to suppose that the word *wa* (蛙) a frog, may have been misunderstood and mistaken for *wa* (瓦), a tile, but as the predicate which was attached to the former was evidently inapplicable to the latter, a new one was affixed, as in the following saying: 'Like a tile at the bottom of a well,—hard work to turn itself over' (如井底之瓦, 難把身番). The difficulty in this version is that there is no obvious motive for 'a tile' to 'turn itself over' anywhere, nor if there were a motive, is there any peculiar obstacle to its doing so at 'the bottom of a well.'

The homophony of Chinese is not confined to single characters, but may extend to an entire phrase. Take, for example, the sounds

\* Analogous to mistakes of the ear, due to homophony, are errors of the eye, due to the close resemblance in shape of characters differing in meaning, by 'the whole diameter of the being.' Such blunders serve as a type of others, in the saying: 'Mistaking *feng ching*, for *ma liang*' (錯把馮京當馬涼). where the two points in the *feng* (馮) character, are by the eye transferred to the *liang* (涼) character. The following characters 錫茶壺 were once written on the spout of a tea-pot. These characters would be read 'hsi ch'a hu' (錫茶壺) by nine persons out of ten, and probably by the tenth person as well. Each character in the first triad has, however, one extra stroke, and the proper reading of the three is yang t'u k'un, characters which have no relation to each other, nor to a 'pewter tea-pot.'

*hieh pu liang li*, which may belong to two quite different sets of characters: 'Too great anxiety of heart, why should we resemble the men of Ch'i who dreaded the fall of the sky? A wrong estimate of one's strength, how does it differ from K'ua Fu, who chased the sun?' (心多過慮, 何似杞人憂天, 勢不量力, 何異夸父追日). (So also Mr. Scarborough, No. 68). 'An oath that both shall not exist on the same earth and under the same heaven' (誓不兩立於天地之間). This is said of one who has vowed to kill his father's murderer, or perish in the attempt.

Many of the proverbs heretofore cited are examples of the use of figures of speech, some of which are self-explanatory, while others without an explanation are almost incomprehensible.

Of the former class are such expressions as 'Giving one a shoe too small for his foot' (給他小鞋穿). 'To drive a dumb man to speak' (擠着啞吧說話). 'To drive a duck to roost' (打着鴨子上架), etc., etc. The sayings: 'You have put on a lousy robe' (你算披上虱子襖咧), and 'To give one a decayed fish-head, which he is to pick over at his leisure' (給他個爛魚頭, 叫他慢慢的擇去), would be likely to suggest other ideas, however, than that of a task involving much trouble.

'When a child goes abroad *he takes his mother's hand*' (孩子往外走, 帶着娘的手). This would appear to be another form of the saying that 'The child cannot leave his mother, as a melon cannot be separated from its stem' (孩不離娘, 瓜不離瓠).

But the word *hand* here represents 'handiwork' (手斷), and the proverb means that the character and workmanship of the child's dress show what kind of work the mother does, whether she is industrious or idle.

'Your money is all spent in recklessly building a *Wu Tsang temple*' (你的錢全都胡蓋了五臟廟了). There are temples to Ti Tsang P'u Sa (地藏王菩薩), who is supposed to receive the souls of the dead, but no such thing as a 'Wu Tsang temple.' The Wu Tsang, or Five Viscera, are figuratively called a 'temple.' The meaning is that the person addressed spends all he has on food.

'Rolling from a horse, escaping, and *washing the hands*' (滾馬脫逃洗了手). This refers to mounted bandits, who, when hard pressed by those sent to take them are compelled to slip from their horses and take to their heels. After this narrow escape, they are



supposed to change their names (改姓埋名), and give up the bandit business, a proceeding which is figuratively described as 'washing the hands.'

'Beating on the edge of a drum, breaking the flower staff' (敲邊鼓兒, 折花竿兒). These figurative expressions are used (with what special significance is not obvious) with reference to one who, finding another person angry with a third party, tells the angry man something which makes him angrier than ever.

'What a dim-lamp, libation-trough kind of a way you have' (看你這個悶燈奠池的樣子). The mention of these aperturances of the pavilion erected for the spirit of a dead person (靈棚) is intended to suggest a subdued and only semi-animate behavior, characteristic of one who never does anything properly, and whose manner is a continued 'apology for his existence.'

技痒難撓. This is one of the many Chinese sayings which it is impossible to transfer to an English translation without considerable expansion, for what could one possibly understand by it, though he were to read—'Expert itching hard to scratch?' The word *yang* (痒) to itch, as applied to one who is an adept in anything, signifies that feeling of jealousy excited by seeing that another (whose abilities he is persuaded are no greater than his own) succeeds better than he does himself. Whether the lack of success is due to inferior abilities, or because great abilities have no field in which they may shine (like a bright pearl thrust into lacker 明珠投漆) his jealous 'itching' is equally 'hard to scratch.'

The difficulty of comprehending proverbs which embody an allusion merely local, has been made evident in those of this class already cited.

If, for instance, it is desired to convey the idea that a person, like a bad penny, has reappeared, it could be readily done by the saying: 'A blind alley,—turned up again' (死衚衕碰回來了), where it is only necessary to speak the first clause to convey the meaning of the whole.

But if the same idea were to be conveyed by the phrase, 'The old country dance,—come around again' (老秧歌, 又番回來了), no one would understand the first clause by itself unless he were aware that a competitive exhibition (賽會, as at Tientsin) of which this 'country dance' was a feature, was in the habit of

perambulating the streets, and then returning upon its tracks repeatedly (又 番 回 來 了).

The use of words in senses which have but a limited currency, and which, so far as dictionaries go, are wholly unauthorized, is doubtless universal in China. Many such words have fallen under notice in other connections, but they should not be altogether overlooked in the consideration of ambiguities and forms of speech difficult to comprehend. As an instance of this, let us take the phrase already explained, *kai jen* (改 人), signifying the language of banter, a light and scoffing way of treating others, "to *guy*."\* To carry this railing to an extreme pitch is called *kai 'tou* (改 透). In the following saying these phrases are embodied, and the assumption is that this business of bantering others is like a route on which one may go a whole day's journey. 'If you wish to banter me thoroughly, then banter me thoroughly, but how far will you carry your banter, to make a full stage?' (改 透 了, 你 可 把 我 改 透 了, 改 到 那 裏 是 一 站).

'You are an old thirty *per cent.* fur goods' (你 是 老 三 分, 皮 子 貨). The standard rate of interest at the pawn shops is assumed to be two *per cent.* a month, but in the case of fur goods, which are liable to injury, the interest is half as high again. From this high rate for fur garments the words 'skin' (皮 子) or 'skin goods' (皮 貨), have come to be used of those who act in a miserly way, oppressing others.

The use in the same sentence of local or unauthorized expressions in a literal and in a figurative sense, frequently have the effect of making a pun, of which copious examples have been already cited. There is often nothing whatever in the words used to give a hint of the sense which they are intended to convey.

'Cheap bone plates seek trouble for themselves' (賤 骨 碟 子, 自 找 煩 惱). 'Pork and mutton each have their price; but cheap bones and meat have no price' (猪 肉 羊 肉 全 有 價, 賤 骨 肉 沒 有 價).

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\* After the capture of Tientsin, when the Chinese had gained courage enough to return, the foreign soldiers indulged in many pranks at their expense. An educated Manchu told the writer that he saw a handsomely dressed Chinese drawn in a jinriksha by a coolie, compelled by a foreign soldier to get out and pull the vehicle while the coolie rode inside. This was suggested as an extreme example of *kai jen* (改 人), i.e., changing the man!



The words *chien ku jou* (賤骨肉), cheap bones and meat, signify one who is without sense of propriety and self-respect, and who needlessly provokes others to vilify and to beat him.

The inhabitants of Shantung are nicknamed *k'ua tzu* (夸子), and the phrase *kua k'u tan* (刮苦胆) is also applied to any stranger, who is also a *greenhorn*, or general ignoramus.

This phrase is reproduced by way of pun, in the following saying: 'Using a wooden dipper to cut open a fish; scraping the bitter gall' (馬勺子割魚, 刮苦胆).

The words *p'i Chiang* (皮匠) signify one who works in leather, but *kua p'i Chiang* (刮皮匠) is a satirical designation for one who is an insufferable nuisance—as if he rubbed the skin off from others. 'You are evidently making sport of me' (你分明是打我的刮皮匠). The word *k'ua* is also used to express contempt towards ignorance, as *k'ua pan tzu*, *k'ua chou tzu*, *k'ua hsiao tzu*; etc. It is to suggest one or the other of these ideas that the descriptions in the following phrases are prefixed.

'A vegetable stalk used for pulling on one's shoes,—an awkward handle' (菜帮子提鞋, 垮拔子).

'A rolling pin supporting the wheels of a cart,—a preposterous kind of axle' (赶麵棍架車輪, 垮軸子).

'A summer hat, used for holding cooked food,—a clumsy dipper' (凉帽盛飯怯勺).

The resemblance between the shape of the hat and that of the dipper suggests the saying: 'The old man from the country who has never seen the cases for ancestral tablets,—an awkward kind of shrine' (莊稼老未見過靈書套, 怯龕).

"You are one of the dried beancurd cakes sold outside the north gate, with the *meng* character on it" (你是北門外的豆腐乾, 孟字的). This is a Tientsin saying, which refers to cakes stamped with the name of the dealer. The implication is that the person to whom it is spoken is stupid to a high degree, and may be described by the *meng* (蒙) character.

就是蓆頭兒蓋着的事,也須容人說合. 'Even if it is a mat-covering business, there ought to be an opportunity for *peace-talkers* to adjust it.' This means a murder case, in which the body is covered with a mat, pending a settlement. The saying is in direct contravention of the laws, which rigidly forbid the private adjustment of such matters (私合人命).

The phrase *hao chia huo* (好傢伙) is colloquially employed of anything which is satisfactory,—‘a good article.’ The phrase is, however, often used ironically. When anyone wishes to imply that a thing is not so good as its owner supposes, he may do so by observing satirically, ‘Chiu Chiang chinaware’ (九江磁, 好傢伙). This is the city in the province of Kiangse where the best China is made, and its mention is intended to suggest the words, ‘A fine article!’

Many phrases belonging to the class now under consideration are periphrases, or aliases (別名), varying from the self-explanatory to the incomprehensible. Thus to excite extreme indignation is called ‘Kindling the Nameless Fire,’ hence the saying—‘The anonymous fire rising to the height of a hundred thousand feet’ (無名火起萬丈高), said of one in a ‘towering passion.’

Among the various kinds of hair-pins worn by Chinese women, is one with a fork at the outer end, and which (perhaps because it proves so useful in scratching the head) has earned the nickname of ‘busy-at-both-ends’ (兩頭忙).

Hence the proverb, ‘The old lady’s hair pin,—busy at both ends’ (老太太的簪子, 兩頭忙). This is used of one who has work to do in two places, etc.

The popular name of the mole-cricket is *la la ku* (拉拉蛄), although the proper appellation is (螻蛄). It is believed that when this insect appears above the surface of the ground there is sure to be rain within three days. This is because *la la ku* is a brother-in-law of *Lung Wang*, the Dragon King who superintends the rain! The consequence of this relationship is that a wife’s younger brother is in some places called a *la la ku*!

The name of this insect is also used in banter. A figurative expression for a great feast is ‘Cooking a Dragon and killing a Phoenix,—eating and drinking on a great scale, (烹龍宰鳳, 大吃八喝).

An antithetical saying is used of a feast which is no feast at all: ‘Eating and drinking on a great scale,—frying mole cricket’ (大吃八喝, 炒喇喇蛄), an insect which is particularly fetid and disagreeable.

‘Men fear to wear boots, women fear to wear a cap’ (男怕穿靴, 女怕帶帽). Old men are supposed to be liable to swelling of the feet, which is denoted by the phrase ‘wearing boots,’ and which



is sure to be fatal! Women are subject to a swelling of the head, a symptom the prognostic of which is also of the worst, the swelling being denoted by the words 'wearing a cap!'

The phrases 'Face full of flowers' (滿臉花), 'Ear gourd' (耳瓜子), and 'Old priest fanning a lamp' (老和尚搗燈), are all expressions denoting a box on the ear, or a blow on the cheek. To say: 'I will give you an old-priest-fanning-out-a-lamp' (給你个老和尚搗燈), means, 'I will box your ears.'

Some terms of this sort are doubtless overflows from the 'secret dialects,' to which attention has been already directed. 'The Great Insect fears only the benevolent man' (大蟲只怕慈心的人). The 'great insect' is the *tiger*, and the saying signifies that a very wicked man fears no one but a very good man, in whose presence he is cowed.

'Friends on the staff,—persons who handle the stick' (杆兒上的朋友, 棍兒手). These are appellations derived from the secret dialects for beggars, who are generally armed with a stick to repel dogs.

'Reduced to a back-of-the-hand-facing-down' (落的手背朝下). 'Having become a hand-stretching-general' (成了个伸手將軍). These phrases also are circumlocutions for *beggars*.

'The superior man on the beam' (樑上的君子), is an appellation for a thief, like our expression 'Gentlemen of the road.'

Urge the can-go along the 'open-pass' (緊催能行, 上了陽關). The 'can-go' is a horse, the 'open-pass' is the great highway.

A particularly unintelligible class of proverbial allusions is that which refers to popular theatrical performances. The phrase, 'The pole was given you by your uncle' (杠子是舅舅給的), would be as incomprehensible to a foreigner as 'Tommy make room for your uncle' would be to a Chinese. There is a play in which a lad who had lost all his patrimony went to his uncle for help. His uncle gave him a pole for an outfit, and advised him to 'take to the road,' that is, to become a highwayman (打杠子的). The words are used in a bantering way to one who is seen carrying a pole, which suggests that he may have been begging of his 'uncle.'

'Old Mrs. Wang painting her eyebrows,—a daub on one side, and another daub on the other side' (王婆子畫眉, 東一掃西一掃的). This is said of work, like mortaring or sweeping, carelessly done.

'Old Mrs. Wang reviled a chicken, and old Mrs. Li would not agree to it' (王婆子罵雞, 李婆子不依). 'Old Mrs. Wang reviling a chicken,—an old story' (王婆子罵雞, 老話). These sayings refer to an incident in a play. The first is used of two parties in a quarrel, and the second in allusion, for example, to some piece of 'news' which everybody knew long ago, and which is now an 'old story' (老話).

'The second daughter' is a character in a certain play, and the designation is employed in the same loose way as the names of *Chu Pa Chieh* and *Wu Ta-Lang* to denote any one of the class.

'The second daughter may carry the keys, but though she is the house-keeper she controls nothing' (二姑娘帶鑰匙, 當家不能主事). This is said of one who is in charge of anything, but who has no discretion but to follow orders.

'The second daughter combing her hair—an extra touch' (二姑娘梳頭多一篋子). Neither this saying nor the preceding is based upon any actual occurrence in the play to which allusion is made. The phrase *to i min tzu* (多一篋子) is used of those final touches to the arrangement of their hair in which Chinese ladies (as well as others) delight. The saying is used of one who meddles with anything already accomplished, especially in a capitious, fault-finding way.

Technical expressions of every variety are liberally woven into Chinese proverbs. Some refer to current superstitions, many of which have been already explained, others relate to fortune telling, to gambling, and various trades and arts, while some are literary or scholastic expressions. 'Like one's own boy; resembling a son' (猶子比兒). This line from the *Millenary Classic* contains two synonyms for a nephew.—not exactly son, but similar to a son.

The twelve 'horary characters' (地支) are indispensable in fortune telling. In the following expression four of these represent the whole. '*Tzu, Wu, Mao, Yu*,\*—I will tell you them all' (子午卯酉的, 全給你說出來了). These characters, which determine the minuter details of one's fortune, which depend upon the exact natal hour, are used to intimate that you shall have the most exact statement of what concerns, not half a sentence left untold.

\* 子午卯酉 stand for midnight, noon, 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., and may be supposed to include all between these intermediate points.



'Metal fate and water fate,—they all came' (金命水命的, 奔了來). Each of the five elements has its destiny, as connected with human life. This saying may be used as in the proverb last quoted, a part standing for the whole.

So also the saying: 'Frogs and rats, they all came' (蛤蟆老鼠的, 全來了), indicating completeness in a bad sense; or it might mean that they came daring fate, risking their lives (拚命).

'You only prognosticate after the horse has gone' (你全是馬後課). The horse divination (馬前課) is a process by which the results of a journey are ascertained by auguries. There is no such thing as a presage *after* the event. The expression is used of one who repents his acts too late, who sees his folly when it cannot be helped.

'A case where the horse steps on the cart' (馬踏車的事). This refers to a game of chess in which the knight or horse threatens a cart (車) or castle, which has no way to escape. It is used of affairs in which something *must* be done, yet where nothing *can* be done.

'Running into a four-door bushel bottom' (跑了个四門斗底的). This saying is an allusion to a delicate piece of strategy, described in Chinese military works. The army is drawn up in a hollow square, shaped like the character *ssu* (四) or like a wooden bushel, with entrances on each side. In the centre of the square stands a tall pole, upon which is a box (方斗) like those seen on the flag-staffs in front of Chinese Yaméns. In this sentry-box a look-out is posted with four flags of different colors, or, if it be night, with a lantern. The enemy is supposed to be hovering on the outskirts, as anxious to get into this magic square, as a moth-miller to singe off his wings in the flame of a candle. At whichever door the enemy appears he is allowed to walk in, whereupon the door is precipitately closed, to his permanent ruin! Perhaps no method more entirely satisfactory could be devised, if a general could only be sure that the enemy would not avoid the square altogether. The saying is employed of one who has been on all sides looking for a thing, and yet after all has failed to find it.

'This child will turn out a third class clown' (這小子居然是个三花臉兒). Theatrical performers have three varieties of clowns, whose function is to excite laughter, and keep the audience in good humor. The first (called "great flower faces," 大花臉)

have their entire faces painted, the second class (二花臉) have much less paint, and the third class paint only the eyebrows, nose, and mouth. Clowns are also called *ch'ou tzu* (丑子) and are considered a particularly disreputable class of a disreputable fraternity.

'Gormandizing to the point of turning lofty somersets' (饞的打高力勛斗). Among the books of light literature (閑書) of the Chinese, is one called the *Hun Yüan Ho* (混元盒), in which a lizard (蠍虎子) is represented as becoming first a sprite (成妖精) and then a man, in which character he acts in a theatrical performance in Peking, throwing lofty somersaults as if resting on the air.

The name *kao li chin tou* (高力勛斗) is said to be taken from this book, but by a misapprehension due to homophony it is sometimes written *Corean somersault* (高麗勛斗). The phrase is used contemptuously of one who has an abundance to eat, and who presumes on his prestige, doing nothing which is of any use.

The Chinese are as well aware of the evil attending the practice of gambling, in all its various forms, as any people ever were. The numerous exhortations against this habit, not only in the Virtue Books, but in the current proverbs of the people, are familiar to all Chinese.

家有骰子牌, 引進孽賬來, 'Dice and dominoes in a family will introduce retribution.'

賭近盜, 姦近殺, 'Gambling is akin to robbery; adultery is next door to murder.'

久賭無勝家 'Those who gamble are sure to lose in the end, and this is still true though the skill of the players may be that of gods and fairies' (久賭神仙輸).\*

But it is one thing to know the right way, and another thing to walk in it. Gambling and the use of opium are the national vices of China. Evidences of the truth of this remark are everywhere afforded by constant observation, and, in the case of gambling, by the number and variety of technical expressions relating to various forms of gaming, which have found their way into common speech. Such expressions in themselves considered are utterly

\* It may be mentioned as an additional exemplification of the practical embarrassments of homophony, that a Chinese teacher to whom this sentence was dictated :—'*Chiu tu shen hsien shu*,' reproduced what he supposed to be the words spoken, as follows :—'*Chiu tu sheng hsien shu*' (久讀聖賢書), 'Long perusal of the books of the holy men and sages!'



unintelligible, but the readiness with which they are understood, evidences the universal prevalence of the gambling habit.

大天靠么四, 疑惑鬼, 'Great Heaven next to the yao four,—a doubtful devil.' Dealers in articles sold on the street, as bread cakes, confectionery, etc., are often provided with a bamboo tube containing a set of sticks, somewhat resembling chop-sticks, each of which is marked at the lower end by dots in a manner similar to dominoes. Three sticks are thrown at once and certain combinations win, but the chances against winning are said to be at least ten to one. If the purchaser draws his three sticks (掣三籤) and wins, he pays only one cash where he would otherwise pay six. If he fail to win he loses the one cash which he risked.

The exciting quality of this petty gambling is such that it is often impossible for a dealer in the articles usually sold in this way to sell them in any other way. If he gave up his tube and sticks he would lose all his custom.

Each combination of dots has its own technical name; thus double-six is called 'great heaven' (大天), six and five are called *hu t'ou* (虎頭), 'tiger's head,'\* one and five are called *yao wu* (么五).

These three sticks make a winning combination called *kuei* (歸). When the sticks are drawn, the customer, who is perfectly acquainted with the rules, often gazes at the sky while he reads the dots on the sticks *with his fingers*. The supposition is that in this case he has drawn the double-six and the one and four, which differ by only one dot from being the same as two of the sticks drawn in the *kuei* (歸) combination, and is hence by a natural pun called a *doubtful devil* (疑惑鬼). The saying is used of one who leads others to suppose that he is possessed of abilities of which he is in reality destitute.

押攤不盖盖, 亮盒搖着, 'The dice case left uncovered,—rattling an open box.' The *ya t'an* (押攤) or *yao t'an* (搖攤) is a covered dice-box. To say that the dice are shaken when the cover is off means that anything is done openly and above board.

'Playing until the board is cleared and all captured,—nothing left to be taken' (鬧了个全攤大截, 自尊落後). The supposi-

\* This name gives occasion for the following proverb:—'When a tiger's head (six and five) is reflected in a mirror, there are two tigers' heads' (虎頭照鏡子, 二虎頭). This may be said of a violent fellow who plays the bully, he is a six and five reflected, a double tiger's head.

tion is that some one player has captured all the dominoes of every other player as fast as put down. This is called *ch'üan t'an ta chieh* (全灘大截), or in gambling slang, 'cleaning them all out.' The two dominoes marked with a two and a one, and a three and a one, (called *tzu tsun* 自尊), and which cannot be taken by any other dominoes, are all that are left (自尊落後).

'Half a set of dominoes,—one man only' (半充骨牌, 一个人). 'An entire set consists of twenty-four, and is called a 'couple of men' (對大人). Half a set, or twelve, is 'one man' (一个人). The expression is applicable to any circumstances when 'only one man' is left.

One of the numerous devices for gambling is the use of the 'precious case' (寶盒). A cloth is spread over a table and upon the cloth are marked two lines like the letter X. At each of these angles is written a number from one to four. The 'precious case' stands at one side; within is a small piece of wood red on one side, and called the 'precious heart' (寶心).

The manager privately adjusts the inside wooden heart and sets the case down with the cover on. The players put their money on whichever number they choose. If this number happens to be nearest the 'heart,' the player is said to 'match the red' (對紅) or to 'cover the precious' (押寶).

'You two have matched the red' (你二人算是對了紅咧). The saying is used of two persons who have the same opinions or plan.

'If one man wins ten times, ten men cannot pay the winnings' (一个人押十寶, 十个人駝不了). The result of 'covering the precious,' is that the player risks one cash and wins three others. The Chinese are perfectly acquainted with rapid increment of a 'geometrical progression.' The player who begins with one cash and wins ten times has at the close 1,048,576 cash!

An idea similar to that in this proverb is conveyed in the saying:—'A single egg if allowed to roll for ten years becomes unmanageable' (一个雞蛋, 擱不住滾十年), i.e., if a capital ever so insignificant constantly increases it soon grows to vast proportions.

With such possibilities of great good luck, mingled with the chance of remediless ruin, it is difficult to act in accordance with the saying, 'Gamble with a mind at ease (prepared for any event);



never gamble in an anxious frame of mind,'—for then you will be sure to lose (鬆心賭, 別揪心賭).

Dice are generally thrown in an open bowl. If considerable force is used they may jump out. 'Throwing dice in an oil basket, —not one can get away' (油簍擲骰子, 沒有跑). The oil-basket is large with a narrow neck. The saying is used of an enterprise which is perfectly safe.

'Throwing the dice when one knows that the bowl is a broken one' (認着破盆擲). This proverb is the opposite of the last, and means that although an enterprise is seen to be hopeless, yet the person engaged in it is unwilling to give it up, just as the gambler is still held by the intoxication of the game though he may have 'lost until up and down he is like a candle' (輸了个上下一支燭), i.e., stripped bare.

As 'the weasel bites only the sick duck' (黃鼠狼單咬病鴨子), so it is a well-recognized fact that the poorer a man is, the more infallibly certain it is that he will lose when he gambles: In playing for money, it is the bitter devil who always loses; dogs bite those who wear tattered clothing' (頑錢輸苦鬼, 狗咬邋遢人).

The use of specific numbers to express general ideas has been already noticed.\* 'One fit of intoxication dispels three anxieties' (一醉解三愁).

'One acrid taste relieves three longings of the stomach' (一辣解三饑).

'Brushing away three calamities, saving from eight troubles.' These are predicates of the 'goddess of mercy,' *kuan yin p'u sa*.

'A hatred like that of one heaven and two earths; an enmity like three rivers and four seas' (一天二地恨, 三江四海仇). Here the numbers, the first quoted from the Book of Changes, merely indicate magnitude and increment; great and growing hatred, deepening hostility.

'One's heart like fifteen buckets of water,—seven going up and eight going down' (心中是十五个吊桶打水, 七上八落的).

\* To the oblique methods of indicating numbers, mentioned under the head of puns, may be added the following, the first of which would be current only in a dialect like that of Tientsin, where (as in parts of Great Britain) the sound of the letter H is 'declined without thanks.' 'A mountain on a mountain' (山上山) *san shang san* for 'Three on three' (三上三), i.e., Thirty-three. 'One large and one small' (一大一小), or still more obliquely, 'A father and his son' (兒子跟着父親), that is, 'A large one and a small one,' in other words, one hundred and one (一百一).

The object to which the numeral refers is frequently suppressed. Thunder can be heard eight hundred, lightning illuminates a thousand' (雷聽八百, 閃照一千), *i.e.*, miles (里).

'Man is an earthly fairy, if for ten days together he is not seen he travels a thousand [*li*]' (人是地上仙, 十天不見走一千). This means that men can go anywhere at will.

'You will be sent to the yamên of the eighth assistant magistrate, and there you will get a string of boards' (送你到八衙, 去打一吊板子). This saying is sarcastic throughout. The assistants of the district magistrate, as already observed, are first, second, third, and fourth. There is no such thing as an eighth assistant. The word *tiao*, which is ordinarily employed to signify a 'string of cash' or one thousand, is here used to denote a thousand blows with the bamboo (一千板子). The intention is to intimate that both prosecution and punishment are altogether imaginary.

'One leer at an elder brother,—forty heavy' (烈兄一眼, 重責四十), *i.e.*, blows with the bamboo.

'Left and right on each side you shall have fifty large' (左右的一邊給你个大五十), *i.e.*, blows on the face, or by accommodation, fifty large cash.

'Give him that is in the right five eights, and the one who is in the wrong forty' (給他个有理的五八, 無理的四十). The intention is to discourage fighting altogether, no matter who is right. It is 'six of one and half a dozen of the other.'

The latter idea may also be expressed by the saying, 'One on the rushes, the other on the mat'—which is made of rushes (一个在蓆上, 一个在蓆子上), *i.e.*, both alike.

Or, more precisely, by the phrase, 'Half a catty and eight ounces' (半斤八兩), all the same, as broad as it is long.

'He that is filial to the extent of sixteen ounces, will be repaid by his sons and grandsons a full catty' (孝親十六兩, 後輩兒孫還一斤).

'Don't behave in this half-a-catty-and-four-ounce manner, without any spirit' (你別半斤四兩的不高興), *i.e.*, wake up, and go to work, do not make "two bites of one cherry."

'This is sixteen ounces and five-tenths good luck,—the head held high' (如今是十六兩五的運氣, 大抬頭).

The circumstances supposed are reversed in the next. 'There are only ninety-nine,—never a hundred and one' (只有九十九



的, 沒有一百一的). This means that nothing is ever ideally perfect.

'Of ten affairs nine will fail' (十事九不全). The suppressed noun is often the word *tenths*, as we say 'three parts good,' etc. So in the saying (already quoted) concerning the physical geography of the earth, 'Three mountains, six water, one *tenth* arable land' (三山, 六水, 一分田).

At first sight the following saying would appear to mean, 'The things that do not go as one could wish will always be eight or nine (out of ten), and of these matters, those that we can speak about to others (可與人言), will not be more than one in number' (不如意事常八九, 可與人言無二三). Yet such is the illusive character of the connection between contiguous and apparently related clauses in a Chinese sentence that this meaning is altogether wrong, and we are to understand it as follows: 'Out of ten persons, the number to whom one may talk—confidentially (可與言人)—will not amount to two or to three.'

The following expression means, *not* that it is four to six whether he comes to anything, but 'He is four parts *useless* and six parts *good for nothing*,—what can be done with him?' (你是四六不成材的, 怎麼了手).

The multiplication table would not seem adapted to suggest proverbs, yet they may readily be found in it. 'Perverse behavior,—he does not care whether three sevens make twenty-one or not' (不管三七二十一的硬作). The Chinese multiplication table does not extend beyond nine times nine. The phrase *chiu chiu kuei i* (九九歸一), is therefore used adverbially with the sense of 'after all,' 'at last.'

'You two divide your account by the Two-one-add-make-five rule' (你兩個是二一添作五的分賬). This refers to the rules for reckoning by the Chinese abacus (算盤). A ball on the lower rods is pushed up to represent a thousand cash, a ball on the lower rods is pushed down to meet the other and represents five hundred cash, the result of dividing 1,000 by two. The phrase *erh i tien tso wu* (二一添作五), therefore means, 'two are contained in ten five times.'

'You divide by the Three-one-thirty-one rule' (你們是三一三十一的, 分賬). This is likewise a division formula. One hundred, for example, is divided by three, and the quotient is thirty.

The remaining ten is then divided by three, and the quotient is three. This process is called *san i san shih i* (三一三十一).

The same idea is conveyed in the phrase, 'Three persons, — rake it up into three heaps' (三個人, 是三大堆的, 扒拉開了).

'A few cash are merely *three-down-five-reject-two* and that is the end of it' (幾個錢, 是三下五除二的, 完咧). There are five balls on the lower rod of the abacus, three of which are supposed to be pushed up to represent, for example, three hundred cash. If it is required to add another three hundred, three more balls should be pushed up. But as there are only two more balls left on the rod, one of the two upper balls is brought down, representing by itself five hundred cash, and to remedy the excess, two of the lower three are pushed back again, leaving one ball below (100 cash) and one above (500 cash), representing 600 cash. This process is called *san hsia wu ch'u erh* (三下五除二), that is, rejecting two of the three to make a new five.' The phrase is used as a synonym of extreme simplicity, or to illustrate the facility with which money is gone before you know it.

The following expression is a good sample of the incomprehensible technicalities connected with the reckoning of Chinese money: 對折, 八扣, 攔腰坎.

Some misguided people speak of the squeezes in Chinese *yamêns*, etc., as if they were irregular and lawless. They are not irregular, for they proceed according to rule, and this is one of the rules. Suppose some lucky fellow wins a thousand cash in a law-suit. By the *tui che* (對折), or folding-over process, he is done out of half of it. The next gang of blood-suckers treat him (more mildly) on the *pa k'ou* (八扣) principle, that is, they take one fifth, leaving him *eight-tenths*, or four hundred cash. The next time he runs the gauntlet (called *lan yao k'an* 攔腰坎), the process is similar to the first, leaving the poor victim at the outer gate with one fifth of his original sum. The same idea is graphically expressed in the words, 'Fist, palm, and a kick in the ribs!' (拳頭, 巴掌, 窩心脚).

'In speech and act an eye to the results' (說話做事, 有結果眼), that is, no idle words, no foolish deeds. This phrase is also written with the words 'bones and joints' (節骨) as if, in dealing with fractures, the operator carefully considered the relation between the joints and the bones (安節骨得治).



According to Chinese physiology, the kidneys (內腎) are connected with the strength of the body. There are two depressions in the lumbar region corresponding with the kidneys, which are called 'loin-eyes' (腰眼).

Hence the expression, 'He who has ready money has what helps his loin-eyes' (手中有錢, 助腰眼, 或有錢可以助腰眼子), that is, he can speak and act confidently. The loin-eyes not hard (腰眼子不硬), that is, weak from want of money.

That the allusions contained in many sayings have been lost out of popular memory has been already remarked, and a few examples have been cited. There is, of course, no certainty that what is unknown to one person will be unknown to another, and the most that can safely be said by any one of any proverb or 'common saying'—as of other Chinese matters not comprehended—is, 'I have not yet been able to ascertain what it means.'

'Li Tzu Ch'eng's son—not wanted' (季自成的兒子, 不要了).

Chou Yü-chi (already referred to) captured a son of Li Tzu-sh'eng, and offered to restore him, provided a place called Ning Wu Kuan were not attacked. Li replied that the son was only an adopted one (*yao ti* 要的) and that he did not care for him. The Pass was captured and the son was killed. It required about fifteen years in intermittent inquiry before this explanation was chanced upon. Each of the proverbs appended contains an allusion the explanation of which the writer has failed to discover.

'Ch'in-chuang-tzu selling fish,—great expectations' (秦莊子賣魚, 好想頭). According to one explanation Ch'in-chuang-tzu is the name of a village, but others say it denotes a man. The saying, like several others already cited, is used of one who entertains wild hopes.

'Who cares whether it is Chang the third or *Mu t'ou the sixth*' (那管張三, 木頭六). This is said to mean that it makes no difference *who* the person may be, in other words, that I intend to go on, right or wrong.

'The mouth of him who eats salt and pickles,—if he says devil, devil it is' (吃鹽醬的嘴, 說鬼就有鬼). There must be some quality in the speech of one who eats salt, and pickles, which makes it pleasanter not to contradict him.

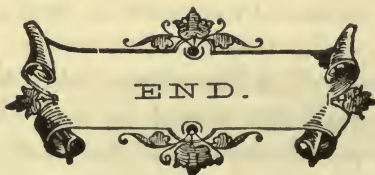
'Two ounces and eight-tenths of silver,—mere benevolence' (二兩八錢銀子, 竟仁). This singular expression is used, by a

pun on the *jen* (仁) character, to denote that there is just one man (竟一人) in the case, or that a person will not give money, but will simply go himself.

A common phrase denoting various forms of industry is *shih hang pa tso* (十行八作), ten kinds of business, and eight trades. A similar saying is embodied in the words 'The hundred and twenty trades' (一百兩十行), which are used to comprehend *all* the various forms of human activity. How the different trades foot up to such a number is not easily explained. It is, however, probably merely a large number—with a combination of characters and a certain rhythm and swing, pleasing to the Chinese—intended to include all possible forms of labor and enterprise.

It is one of the permanent delights of the study of Chinese that it is perennially filled with these pleasant surprises, and insoluble uncertainties.

Should the patient reader who may have followed us thus far, be moved to complain of the exiguous assortment of difficulties here collected he should be pacified by the assurance that he may be able without serious trouble to gather as many more for himself. In which pursuit let us conclude by wishing him "Peace and tranquillity on his entire journey" 一路平安.





## GENERAL INDEX.

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The General Index is intended to be merely supplementary to the Index of Proverbs following,—for the most part without repetitions. Only names of importance are entered.

### A.

Acrostic, example of, 178.  
Actors, the god of, 315.  
Analects. See Chinese Classics.

### B.

Bat, an emblem of happiness, 151, 231.  
Beauties, celebrated, 122-3.  
Books of Odes and Rites. See Chinese Classics.  
Book of Rewards and Punishments quoted, 25, 202, 323-4.

### C.

Callery quoted, 19.  
Chang Fei, 102-3, 341.  
Chang Sung and Ts'ao Ts'ao, 105-6.  
Chao Kuang Yin, saying of, 112.  
Chao Yun and Liu Pei, 104.  
Cheng Te, the Emperor, adopting a son, 117-9.  
Chi-nan-fu, tablet in, 150.  
Ch'i, the Duke of, 96, 102.  
Chia Ch'ing and Yen Sung, 116-8; reign of, 332.  
Chiang T'ai-kung, 68, 69, 93.  
Ch'ien Lung, the Emperor, Couplets of, 58-9; and Ho Shen, 121, 156  
159, 160; writing a tablet, 176-7; 320-1; 332.  
Children's sayings, 193-4.  
Chinese Classics quoted :  
    Analects, 13, 14, 41, 89, 289.  
    Book of Changes, 43-44.  
    " " History, 46-7.  
    " " Odes, 44-45, 133, 235, 252.  
    Doctrine of the Mean, 41-42, 235.  
    Great Learning, 14, 41.  
    Mencius, 42-43, 189, 191, 222, 245-6.  
    Millenary Classics, 40-41, 252-3.  
    Trimetrical Classic, 40, 303-4.  
    Tso Chuan, 171.  
*Chinese Recorder* quoted, 59, 61, 259, 332.  
    " *Repository* " 89, 159, 198.  
    " and *Japanese Repository*, 89.

Ch'in Kuei, the rebel, 95.  
 Chou Hsing Ssu, author of the Millenary Classic, 40.  
 Chu Hsi (Chu Fu-tzu), the Commentator, 125.  
 Chu Ko Liang (K'ung Ming), 103-5, 333.  
 Chu Yuan Chang, 323-9, 337. See Hung Wu.  
 Ch'ü Yuan and the Dragon Boat Festival, 110.  
 Ch'uan Chia Pao, 10, 21.  
 Ch'ung Cheng, losing the Ming Dynasty, 117.  
 Confucius and the Mohammedans, 198; and Yen Yuan, 189  
 Corea, tranquillization of, 108.  
 Cryptograms, 175-8.

## D.

Dialects, Secret, 209-213.  
 Doolittle's Handbook quoted, 9, 14, 21, 24, 25, 27, 48, 159, 278, 332.  
 „ Social Life, etc., 202.  
 Door gods, origin of the, 107.

## F.

Feng Shen Yen I quoted, 93.  
 Five Great Families, the, 321.  
 Footbinding, legendary origin of, 106-7.

## G.

Giles' Dictionary, II; Biographical Dictionary, 91.

## H.

Han Hsiang Tzu, 84.  
 Han Shih Chung, pursuing a Tartar Chief, 178.  
 Han Wen Kung, the original of the T'u Ti Yeh, 271.  
 Hen-pecked Man, Essay on the, 166-9; 179.  
 Ho Shen, 121, 156, 159, 160.  
 Holmes, Dr. O. W., quoted, 54.  
 Hsi Shih, a famous beauty, 122.  
 Hsi Yu Chi, the, 275-280.  
 Hsiang Chi, or Pa Wang, 101-2.  
 Hsieh Hsüeh Shih. See Shen T'ung.  
 Hsien Feng, the reign of, 332.  
 Hsüeh Jen Kuei and Corea, 108.  
 Hu T'o River, channel of the, 128.  
 Huo, the Abbe, quoted, 266.  
 Hung Wu, couplet by, 57, 116, 129.

## K.

Kan Lo, saying of, 95.  
 K'ang Hsi, 59, 331; Dictionary of quoted, 99, 323.  
 Kuan Yü, 102-3.

## L.

Lanterns, Feast of, Riddles at the, 164.  
 Legge, Dr., quoted, 13.  
 Li Ch'un Feng and the T'ui Pei T'u, 326-7.



Li Po, verses by, 70, 235.  
 Li T'ien Wang, 93.  
 Li Tzu Ch'eng, 116-7, 199, 329, 337.  
 Liao Chai, the, quoted, 69, 323.  
 Liu Hsia Hui, 95.  
 Liu Hsiang Ju, 98.  
 Liu Pei, 102-3, 306.  
 Liu Po Wen, 129, 328-9.  
 Lung Wang, the Dragon King, 362.

## M.

Martin, Dr., Hanlin Papers of quoted, 89, 90.  
 Mayers' Manual, characteristics of, and value, 90-1, quoted *passim*.  
 Meng Ch'ang Chün, 96.  
 Ming Hsien Chi quoted, 18, 91.  
 Ming Dynasty, ruin of the, 116-7.

## N.

Nicknames of Buddhist priests, 235-6, 296; of those with defects, 210; Shantung people, 361.  
 No Ch'a T'ai Tzu, 93.  
 Numbers, method of indicating, 217-220; 369-372.

## P.

Peach Orchard, the, 86, 102-3.  
 P'eng Old, 124, 307.  
 Pyramid, discoveries at the Great, 338-9  
 Python, the double-headed serpent, 317.

## S.

Sacred Edict quoted, 22.  
 Scarborough's Proverbs quoted, 9, 10, 14, 16, 21, 22-4, 25, 26, 27-8, 48, 91, 94, 95, 261, 278, 300, 346, 358.  
 Sects, Buddhist and Taoist, 258-9, 283; Eight Diagrams, the, 191; hanging out a board, 293; Mencius quoted by the, 191; Purificationists in the, 187, 190; the Tsai Li, or White Clothes, 220; verses made in the, 149, 150.  
 Shen T'ung, verses by, 64, 66, 266.  
 Shun Chih, reign of, 331.  
 Singing, Chinese, 233-4.  
 Stent's Dictionary quoted, 254.  
 Storyteller, the Chinese, 120.  
 Su Tai, fable ascribed to, 90.

## T.

T'ang San Tsang, in quest of the Buddhist books, 275.  
 T'ang T'ai Tsung and Hsü Ching Tsung, 77-8; and the T'ui Pei T'u, 327.  
 Tao Kuang, the Emperor, 7, 113, 321, 332.  
 Taoist Pope, the, 240-1.  
 Theater, the Chinese, 120; Chinese plays originating proverbs, 363-4.

- Thom, Mr. R., translation of Aesop's Fables, 89.  
 Three Doctrines one, 74 ; struggling for preeminence, 280-3.  
 Three Kingdoms (novel), 86-7.  
 Trench, Archbishop, on Lessons of Proverbs, 2.  
 Ts'ang T'ou Shih, etc., 171-6.  
 Ts'ao Ts'ao and Yuan Shao, 104-6.  
 T'ui Pei T'u described, 325-331.  
 Tung Cho, lines on the death of, 183.  
 Tung Fang So and Wu Ti, 307.

## W.

- Wade, Sir Thomas, quoted, 22.  
 Wang Po Hou, author of the Trimetrical Classic, 40.  
 Whately's Logic quoted, 349.  
 William IV of England, title of, 336.  
 Williams' Dictionary quoted, 21-2, 318, 324.  
 Wu Ti and Tung Fang So, 307.  
 Wylie's Notes on Chinese Literature, 86.

## Y.

- Yao Niang and foot-binding, 106.  
 Yen Sung begging with a silver bowl, 116, 119.  
 Yen Ying killing three Ministers with one peach, 96.  
 Yuan Shao and his troops, 104.  
 Yuan T'ien Kang, and the T'ui Pei T'u, 326-7.  
 Yuen Fei, 115.  
 Yung Cheng, 331.  
 Yung Lo, Couplet by, 58 ; encyclopedia of, 86 ; sweeping the north, 312.





## INDEX OF PROVERBS.

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In this Index most of the Proverbs are entered more than once, usually under the most prominent *nouns*; but sayings relating to persons or places of limited importance, and a few classes (such as "The Old Villager," and the like) are merely indicated without detail. 'P' signifies that the sentence occurs in a Poem; 'C' that it is a part of a Couplet. No pains have been spared to make it extremely difficult not to find what is wanted.

### A.

- Abilities, great, wasted, 36.  
Able men in reserve, 17.  
Above, those who are, act, those below follow, 8, 321.  
Abroad, trouble on going, 288.  
Abundances, the three, 133.  
Academy, the Civil and the Military, 56.  
Accounts, muddled, 296.  
Adultery, next to murder, 366.  
Advantage, a small, and great loss, 293.  
Age, the, of another should be lessened, 290.  
Alley, a blind, 359.  
Almond, the flowering, and deer's horns, 232.  
Anger at others in possession, 351; where is there any? 226.  
Animals, living, of Chou-erh, 230; man likened to, 296; reluctance to kill and eat, 42; running into the claws of, 321; the five noxious, 315; the six kinds on the roof, 350.  
Anxiety, present, prevents trouble, 41; why should there be? 44.  
Appetite, importance of ruling the, P, 66-7.  
Apricots, small, 230.  
Arm, and legs, exercising the, 34; broken, hidden in the sleeve, 258.  
Arrows, secret, hard to guard against, 335.  
Arsenic, old villager buying, 230.  
Arson, and murder give long life, 10.  
Artemisia in the 5th moon, origin of, 108-110.  
Asking, produces abundance, and a golden colt, 34.  
Asthma and ringworm incurable, 269.  
Autumn, dress in, 268; gathering in, storing in winter, 40, 252.  
Avarice and poverty, characteristics of, 159.  
Axe, got by an axe-handle, 44; of the carpenter will not do for a saw, 230  
Axle, a rolling-pin used for an, 361.

### B.

- Bachelor's hall, kitchen god in a, 204.  
Bald, boy, the, taking off his cap, 202; calling one, 257; depraved, 257; man, the hedge-hog, etc., P, 72; nine out of ten, deceitful, 257.  
Bantering carried to extremes, 360.

- Barber clapping his hand, 208; carry-pole of, short, 226.  
 Basketful of earth lacking, a, 46.  
 Bat, confinement of the, 231.  
 Bathing, after, do not gamble, 313; with a full stomach, 267.  
 Bean on a straw, called a man, 296; weevil in the green, 231; -curd, cakes of, with the Meng character, 361; frozen, 230; jars of, no frame, 224; man as large as three pieces of, 345; mixed with onions, 223; reduced by brine, 243; tied with horse-hair, 196; water of, requires no salt, 224.  
 Beard, a long, hard to raise, 22; on a hare, 295; on a doll, 296.  
 Beasts and men have their language, 213; and men, old age of, P, 71 and 314.  
 Beauty in men and women, tests of, 307.  
 Bed, suffering another man to sleep in my, 112.  
 Bees make honey, 40.  
 Beggar for seven generations, 26; letting off fire-works, 195; —s, and begging, 363; one may go with, but not with the blind, 257; throwing away their gourds, 319.  
 Beginning and ending, of affairs, 41.  
 Bell, a golden, in the mire, P, 73; on one's toes, 230.  
 Below, those who are, imitate those above, 8.  
 Bench, splitting kindling wood under a, 235.  
 Betel nut, the, eating, 146.  
 Better to get than to lose, 25.  
 Bird, the flying, chased by a dog, 33; that could not whistle, 217; —s, die to get food, 236; shooting, no place in for pity, 354.  
 Birthday sweetmeats, both hands full of, 220.  
 Bitter at heart, dumb man eating gentian, 256.  
 Bitterness due to Fate, 206.  
 Black, and white, not distinguishing, 244.  
 Blind, do not associate with the, 257; hatefulness of the, 257; man, carrying a lantern, 205; going to see the Lanterns, 249; grinding a knife, 197; teaching the blind, P, 73; thrumming a lute, 217.  
 Blindness from repairing roads, 10.  
 Blood, coming in tides, 269; of true son entering the bone, 314.  
 Board, cutting with a prune-stone, 230.  
 Boat, cost of keeping a, 20; in front, is eyes to that behind; that waits on a steamer, 217; —s, need not impede the channel, 25.  
 Body, one's whole, covered with boils, 222.  
 Boiler, shelves behind the, 237; too small, 233.  
 Boils, should be starved, 267.  
 Bone, dog gnawing a, 236; —s, ends of broken, matched, 223.  
 Book not having any, 196.  
 Book of Changes, teaches divination, 41. See Chinese Classics.  
 Books, necessary to read five cart-loads of, 119; study of, excels all other pursuits, P, 179-180.  
 Bowl, begging with a silver, 116.  
 Boy, a violent, turns out well, 304; with girl's fingers, 308; —s, 6 or 7, you are the worst, C, 56.  
 Brains of living man given to a child, 304.  
 Branch, one moves, and 100 shake, 31.  
 Bread-cakes, do not steam, 225; of En Hsien, 234.  
 Bricks and mold alike, 31; making adobe, 353.



Bride, a newly married, P, 67 ; mourning her husband, 207.  
 Bridge, a share in the floating, 351 ; of the eight directions, C, 58.  
 Brine, and bean-curd, 243.  
 Brothel, a pit for the myriad, 259-260.  
 Brother-in-law, little girl mourning for her, 205.  
 Brothers, all within the four seas are, 41 and 228 ; playing on musical instruments, 171 ; property of, should be discriminated, 25 ; sworn, 238.  
 Buddha, to be found everywhere, 291 ; child's heart like that of a, 303-4 ; priest of, wearing a cangue, P, 64-5.  
 Bully, the 'carrying-pole,' 345.  
 Bushel, the southern, etc., 352 ; running into the four-doors, 365.  
 Business, keep to a familiar, 288.  
 Butcher, dying, eating pork with bristles on, 255.

# C.

Cabbages in a plot, 233 ; picked again, 232.  
 Calf-new-born, not afraid of a tiger, 18.  
 Calamity and happiness, 42 ; from heaven and from self, 43.  
 Camel, on a house-top, 223 ; on a mountain, 232 ; taken for a double-backed horse, 244.  
 Candle, bare as a, 369.  
 Candy, pulling in the third Nine, 207.  
 Cannon of Tu Chih Heng, empty, 199.  
 Cap, pheasant with a, 232 ; small on the hand, etc., 351 ; —s, of San Ho Hsien women, 232.  
 Cards, a new set of, 225.  
 Carpenter, taking his axe, 230.  
 Carter, going into exile, 352.  
 Carts do not block the road, 25.  
 Cash, each has an eye, 343 ; eight-hundred falling into a well, 233 ; makes the courage of the brave, 285 ; not a single can be taken away, 259 ; old man picking up a, 218 ; one 'share' of, 218 ; short of, 221 ; sitting on the edge of a, 342 ; there must be, in a purse, P, 68 ; strings of, 214 ; worth of wine, 231.  
 Cat sleeping on a roof, C, 51 ; treading on a corpse, 325 ; —s, coming and dogs going, 313 ; eyes tell the time of day, 266 ; fond of their kittens, 305 ; meat given to a dog, 34 ; weeping over the death of rat, 348.  
 Ceremony and behavior, rules for, 42.  
 Chang Fei, catching a mole, 123 ; losing Hsu Chou, P, 175 ; selling hedge-hogs, 123.  
 Chang T'ien Shih and Li T'ien Wang, 93 ; bewitched by devils, 241 ; coming in clouds, 240 ; never seen to return, 241.  
 Ch'ang An, looking toward, 235.  
 Characters, a bag of false, 29 ; not necessary for a physician to know many, 270 ; similar easily mistaken, 357 ; the horary, telling all, 364 ; weighting one with unfamiliar, 337.  
 Charcoal sent in a snow-storm, 31 ; seller, falling into a flour-jar, 244.  
 Cheek-bones, do not associate with those having high, 257.  
 Ch'en Yu Liang, escaping, 116.  
 Ch'eng Yao Chin's battle axe, 107.  
 Chess-playing, no place for sympathy in, 354 ; with books, drawing, etc., amusement of the rich, P, 71.

- Chi Nan Fu, four peculiarities of, 361 ; frogs of, 132 ; mountains, waters, and people of, 136 ; situation of, 129.
- Ch'i-lin born from a cow, 309.
- Chia Yü Pass, nothing but sky to be seen at the, 133.
- Chiang T'ai Kung, fishing, 94 ; making obeisance, 93 ; telling fortunes, 93 ; (Tzu Ya) waiting until, 80, P, 124.
- Chickens, better at roosting than a phoenix, 254 and 288 ; the solitary from the north, to be dreaded, 331 ; cage, image in, all holes, 200.
- Chickens and ducks, smoked, 206 ; bill and glass bottle, 222 ; do not ask a guest about killing a, 291 ; egg hung in a spider's web, 298 ; feathers, looking for, 223 ; feathers, on a flag-staff, 222 ; feeding with millet, 237 ; old Mrs. Wang, reviling the, 364 ; weasel stealing, 322 ; wild and domestic, 304.
- Chihli people brawlers, 134 ; the one Fair of, 132.
- Child, a foot long needs three feet of cloth, 300 ; cannot leave the mother, 358 ; heart of, like that of Buddha, 303-4 ; in the 12th moon, frozen hands, 232 ; reared for three years, 300 ; selling bread-cakes, 346 ; taken into a pawn-shop, 209 ; taking its mother's hand, 358 ; will turn out a clown, 365.
- Children, beaten on a cloudy day, 304 ; best house-wife cannot manage four, 302 ; born within ten months of parents' marriage, 309 ; cannot do without parents, 305 ; crying at night, P, 75-6 ; endure severe illnesses, 267 ; marriage of, the most important thing, 303 ; not really affectionate, 305 ; of others, succeed, 304 ; should be hungry and cold, 267 ; visible joys, 302.
- Chimneys cleaned with a hemp-stalk, 206.
- China-ware from Kiangsi, 362.
- Ch'in and Chin, the league of, 99.
- Ch'in Sen going into exile, P, 111.
- Ching Chou pagoda, 130.
- Ching Te, without his armour, 107.
- Chopping-knife and whetstone, the, 206.
- Chou's dog barking at Yao, 122.
- Chou Yü Chi's birthday, 116.
- Chronicles, the narration of, and the selection of tunes, C, 60.
- Chu Mai Ch'en, divorcing his wife, 100.
- Chu Pa Chieh, proverbs concerning, 277-280 ; rusty inside, 230.
- Circumstances, to act according to, 21.
- Class, the best of its, 245-6.
- Classes and groups, men and things gathered into, 43.
- Cloth, three feet of, for a child, 300.
- Clothes, inspire others with awe, 285 ; make the age, 285 ; men are judged by, 285 ; no style to one's, 288 ; seven-tenths of fortune, 285 ; the more one has, the colder he is, 349 ; torn, guests are few, 18 ; worn out are clothes, 20.
- Clouds, Chang T'ien Shih coming in, 240 ; continued fleecy in rainy weather, 265 ; floating in space, 205, bringing rain, 264 ; on the 2nd and 16th of the month, 264 ; pasting up, 236 ; road to mounting the azure, C, 53 ; thin, and wind light, P, 179.
- Clown, the child will turn out a, 365.
- Coal, pounding, 238.
- Cock, an earthenware, 242 and 287 ; carried in the arms of a musician, 216 ; crows in the morning, 40.



- Coffin, the old villager buying a, 273.  
 Cold comes, and heat goes, 40; dreaded by the old, 269.  
 Collar-bone, a padlock under the, 324.  
 Colt, a golden obtained by asking, 34.  
 Common-sense, violations of, inexcusable, 24.  
 Compliance, too ready, to be distrusted, 38.  
 Concubine, taking a, like sipping vinegar, 23.  
 Confucius, deserted by Fate, 94; unable to guess a riddle in three days, 164.  
 Conscience common to all, 43.  
 Cook, the, does not make up for spoiled flour, 284.  
 Cooking-kettles broken, and boats destroyed, 101.  
 Copperas, eating, to poison a tiger, 291.  
 Corea, the kingdom of, 224.  
 Corpse, coming to life, and running, 324.  
 Country, on entering a, inquire what is forbidden, 45; the, in disorder, C, 160; the people the root of a, 47.  
 Couplets, first line of forgotten, 35; line of hard to match, C, 50; pasted upside down, 228.  
 Courage, gathering, 223; great, 222.  
 Countenance, alters after thirty, 269.  
 Court, a, every morning, C, 62.  
 Covetousness, folly of, P, 66.  
 Crane, the fairy, dyed black, P, 79.  
 Cricket, a defeated, 199.  
 Cripples kill without a sword, 257; will have one's life, 257.  
 Crops, a failure, 353; require haste, 20.  
 Crow, a stumbling, 195; the golden, sinks to the west 318; the, feeding its young, 26.  
 Cup, an earthenware, coarse at bottom, 205.  
 Customs vary every ten li, 202.

## D.

- Day, of promotion, pointing to the, 153; not one when I do not think of it, 44; one like three months, 44; the, insufficient for the good man and for the bad man, 46; —s, unlucky in each month, 320.  
 Daylight, snowing by, 207.  
 Daughter, Mrs. Meng going to see her, 224; the second, carrying the keys, 364; do. do. combing her hair, 364; —s, must not be kept unmarried, 303.  
 Dawn, and eve, the round moon and the month, C, 61; sneezing at, 237.  
 Dead, men become important, 23; reading books over the, 227.  
 Deaf, the, teaching the dumb, 13.  
 Death comes from ease and pleasure, 43; no substitute for one's, P, 82-84; the fate of all, 41.  
 Debts, the whole body composed of, 200.  
 Deer, a, not to be had by the Old Age Star, 231; riding a, 231.  
 Desires, one's, all met, 348.  
 Devil, a sick, the Judge in Hades, 207; horse meeting a, 212; ignorant pounding of, 314; turning a mill, 355; —s, prince of the, 342; entering when gods go out, 164.  
 Dew, white, and frost, 261.  
 Diagrams, the eight, interpret Fate, P, 124.

- Dice, thrown in a broken bowl, and in an oil-basket, 369. See "Gambling."
- Dieting, and medicine inseparable, 269.
- Differences adjusted, 223.
- Difficult, everything is, on reflection, 23; to do a thing, 18; to make embroidery, 18;—y, comes of perversity, 44.
- Dipper, every strikes the kettle, 293; summer-hat used for a, 361.
- Disease, an incurable, 99; cured, and patient killed, 284; gravity of the, shown by the phlegm, 269; light by day, and v.v., 267; none in the viscera, the patient will not die, 267; of hands and feet, bad, 268; three kinds of deadly, 291.
- Dish for gathering jewels, 311-313;—es, of earthenware, see your set of, 208.
- District Magistrate, Liu Pei acting as, 36; welcoming a constable, 146.
- Divination taught by the Book of Changes, 41.
- Doctrine and Sects, 32; of the Mean, study of the, 41;—s, the three are one, 74; the three, struggling for precedence, 280-2.
- Dog, a silly, chasing a bird, 33; gnawing a bone, a, 236; legs of, and legs of chickens, C, 236; wetting the grass, 91;—s, bite the poor, 285 and 369; fond of their puppies, 305; watch by night, 40.
- Dog-days, first ten rainy, second ten hot, 354; no hope in the, 263.
- Doll, a, made of gentian, bitter, 209.
- Donkey, bunch of flowers on the head of a, 296; crossing a bridge, 240; in a mill, muzzled, 199; my heart taken for the liver of a, 296; nickname for a Buddhist priest, 296.
- Donkey's lips, and horse's mouth, 25.
- Door, the, locked with a golden lock, C, 50;—s, and windows, matched, 242;—sill pulled up, and rolling out, 298.
- Dough-nut, blowing through a hollow, 200.
- Dragon among fish, 246; cooking a, 362; drawn on a fan, C, 51; fears the centipede, 316; going to the den of the old, P, 178; the strong, no match for the local snake, 14;—s, beget dragons, 153; scales lit by the sun, C, 57.
- Dragon-fly, sipping water, 88.
- Drawing, an amusement of the rich, 71; dexterous, 224; elegant, paste on a wall, 222.
- Dream, an infelicitous, to be written on a wall, 318; of the Yellow Millet, P, 136-7.
- Drops one, two, three, of ice cold wine, C, 55.
- Dropsy, fatality of, 268.
- Drought, ceases in the 5th moon, 264; fixed by the 7th moon, 265; brings no rain, 265.
- Drugs in the spring, 267; the 18 incompatible, 284.
- Drug-shop, thistle in the, 223.
- Drum, beating the edge of a, 359; beaten, while playing lily-flowers, 203.
- Duck, the, allowed to escape, 222; driven to roost, 358; egg of, suspended, 298; knob on the head of a, 222; man kicked to death by a, 240; weasel bites the sick, 369.
- Dumb man, dreaming of his mother, 205; driven to speak, 358; eating gentian, 256; only the, are not deceitful, 257; taught by the deaf, 13;—s, loss, to eat, 256.
- Dumplings boiled in a tight vessel, 205.
- Dying at 66, 267; at 73 and 84, 268; like putting out a lamp, 260.
- Dysentery feared by the young, 269; value of the, 269.



# E.

- Each gains his place, 44.  
 Ears, luck from large, 306 ; and v. v., 307 ; of the old, dry, 308 ; space behind the, small, 308 ; to box the ears, 363.  
 Earth, advantages of better than opportunities from Heaven, 42 ; not sparing of treasure, 21 ; -quake, three shocks of, 319.  
 East and West, dipping up the, 156-7 ; he is not any, 51 ; muddled about, C, 51.  
 Easy to look at, hard to do, 18.  
 Eating, by means of eye-sight, 289 ; enough, when the 'face' is 'thick,' 289 ; living, and dying, each for himself, P, 83 ; to excess, and turning somersaults, 366 ; -house, go to a prosperous, 238.  
 Egg, and fly, alike, 31 ; a single, rolling for ten years, 368 ; broken in a fallen nest, 106 ; of chicken, on the head to frighten men, 345 ; the character for (tan) used in abuse, 297-8.  
 Elbow the, cannot twist around the thigh, 258 ; everything like pulling, 258 ; never bends outward, 258.  
 Elephant, taken by an elephant, 15.  
 Embroidery, flowers added to, 31.  
 Emperor (Lord of 10,000 years), C, 58 ; Ministers will be like the, 95 ; no insignificant word in the mouth of the, 320 ; resembling, with golden mouths, 320 ; travelling-palace, demolishing, 321.  
 Enough to eat, 233.  
 Eunuch, taking the share of a, 347.  
 Eye, a falcon, bad sign, 257 ; a single, drawn on a wall, 219 ; —s, asquint, heart depraved, 257 ; not asquint, 257 ; nourishing, starve a boil, 267 ; twitching, 307 ; various sayings relating to the, 340-3 ; with the faculty of discerning, valuable, 289 ; -brows, hair on burned, 244 ; inverted, luck lost, 238.

# F.

- Face, the, beaming with a prayer, 236 ; do not strike the, 294 ; itch appearing on the, 268 ; lost, 220 ; not caring about one's, 196 ; shoes without any, 197 ; thick, food abundant, 289 ; unable to show one's, 196.  
 Fairy, man is an earthly, 370 ; —ies, "No Work," are two, 291.  
 Falcon, woman acting the, 293.  
 False, more than half, 221 ; overcome by the true, 244.  
 Family, affairs of the, State, and the world, concern me, C, 57 ; every, has a goddess of mercy, 291 ; every, has a book hard to read, 291 ; foes of, are the children, 300 ; disputes in, hard to settle, 292 ; no, has nothing the matter, 293 ; of the husband, raises its head, 354 ; poor, rearing a child, 300 ; the whole, not hungry, 355 ; thieves in, hard to guard against, 293.  
 Fan, a broken rush, 283 ; with the wind, do not, 283 ; Yen Wang's, 196.  
 Fan Tan, bitten by a dog, 124 ; poverty of, P, 124 ; rich in sons, 124.  
 Farmer, in the 9th Nine, 263.  
 Fat, nauseated by eating, 223.  
 Fate, children and wealth given by, 299 ; inducing ruin, a, 310 ; metal and water, both coming, 365 ; of men and places, 310 ; to have a short life, 310.

- Father and son, both brave, 18; and son, large and small, 369; and son, nature of alike, 314; can be given up, but not a mother, 305-6; fault of, to rear but not educate, 40.
- Faults and men in abundance, 18; known, should be amended, 40; of another, do not discuss, 253.
- Feast, on a great scale, and v. v. 362; on a mast, 208.
- Feather, not willing to pull out a single, 242, 287; plucked from every passing goose, 33; -duster, looking for material to make a, 223; what a large! 222.
- Feet, resonant, indicate poverty, 308.
- Fei Chung and Yu Hun, 93.
- Feng Huang city, captured, 108.
- Ferry, the, behind the ancestral grave, 233.
- Festival, the, in the 5th moon, 108.
- Fighting, three days without, reviling the kitchen-god, 204.
- Filial obedience, dependent on the behavior of parents, 303; requires posterity, 300; sixteen ounces of, 370; the chief of the 100 virtues, C, 292; the 24 patterns of, 233.
- Fingers, the fore, twitching, denotes plenty, 308; --s, lines on, denote fortune, 314; the, scratching, followed by the thumb, 258; the ten, both long and short, 258; nails, of Yao Ssu, 231.
- Fire, makes smoke, C, 160; nearest to, soonest warmed, 244; not put out by remote water, 32; the nameless, rising 10,000 feet, 362; three feet above the head of the good man, 322.
- Fire-crackers, a gun exchanged for, 221; iron, make no sound, 221; rams-horn, 221; southerner, firing, 228.
- Firewood, splitter of, selecting grave-sites, 36, 319.
- Fire-works, of a beggar, 195.
- Fish, a decayed, to pick, 358; and water, harmony of, 242; beating the wooden, 237; boatload of pickled, 224; climbing a tree for, 42; cutting open with a wooden dipper, 361; dropping to the bottom of the river, 122; on the wall, but one eye, 219; the carp, and the *so*, 306; the large eat the small, 16; will not bite, 213; -dealer, without his basket, 209; -ing-terrace, refusing to leave his, 94.
- Fist, palm, and a kick, 372.
- Flood, washing away the temple of Lung Wang, 322.
- Flour, not made up by the cook, 284; -jar, charcoal seller, falling into a, 244; new born infant falling into a, 207; -soup, iron balls, etc., in, 298.
- Flower, Fir, and Frost, the, P, 80-1; --s, added to embroidery, 31; on iron trees, 331; put to shame by a beauty, 122; soon fade, 176.
- Fly and eggs alike, 31; small, but viscera complete, 166.
- Food, disregarding, but regarding clothes, 244; do not buy, 354; eating one's own, 291; eating under the eyes of others, 341; no flavor to, 288; not to be hastened, 289.
- Foot, a badly bound, 243; honoring another a, 290; one slip of the, 260; the Chinese, and the foreign waist, 352; a large, 232; -cloth, both sides alike, 220.
- Fortune telling, by the fingers, 314.
- Fowl, a, not killed with an ox-knife, 41.
- Fox, arrogating the tiger's prestige, 90; mourns when the hare dies, 348; --es, the nine-tailed, 316; yellow and black, 316.
- Friends, depend upon one's possessions, C, 52; intercourse with, like water, etc., 155; on the staff, 363; should be separated by a wall, 25.



- Friendship, broken by a line on the ground, 115.  
 Frogs from Kiangnan, 236 : in a well, 357 ; man likened to, 296 ; no sound from, 132.  
 Front, regarding the, but not the rear, 243.  
 Fruit, effect of different kinds of, 269 ; in the autumn, 267 ; -orchard, cannot be given up, 306.  
 Fuel, unable to see a wagon-load of, 42.  
 Fur goods, thirty per cent., 360 ; of many foxes to make a robe, 36.

G.

- Gain, men die for, 286 ; is in upright conduct, 42.  
 Gambling, akin to robbery, 366 ; after shaving, and a bath, 313 ; constant, loses, 314, 366 ; do not be anxious, when, 368-9 ; exhortations against, 259 ; in a family, brings retribution, 366 ; technical expressions relating to, 367-9 ; -house, a flaying-hall, 259-260.  
 Garlic, bulbs, 25, 209 ; pounded in a sauce-pan, 204.  
 Gate of the city, knocking on, at midnight, 195.  
 Geese, wild, alighting on the ground, 122.  
 Gems, and stones burned together, 47 ; unwrought, useless, 40.  
 Geomancers will move a house away, 318.  
 Generals and statesmen, not raised from seed, P, 64.  
 Generation, each worse than the first, 70, 245.  
 Gentian, a doll made of, bitter, 209 ; three-tenths more bitter than, 206.  
 Gentlemen, you two are fine, 226.  
 Ghost, a dead man becomes a, 323 ; men afraid of a, 323.  
 Girdle, an ear of corn carried in the, 223 ; of the fat man, long and loose, 206 ; wheelbarrowman finding a, 228 ; —, of Chien Ch'iao, 242.  
 Girl, a violent, is skilful, 304 ; born with a boy's face, 308 ; making diapers, 245 ; married, like water bursting its banks, 302 ; no virtuous has rain or wind at her wedding, 311 ; should fear the plotting youth, 292.  
 Glue and lacker, resembling, 242.  
 God of the kitchen, coming down from his shelf, 203 ; no place to live, 204 ; reporting to Heaven, 202-3, 244 ; returning to his home, 204 ; reviled, 204 ; sitting alone, 204 ; — of the door, wrongly pasted 245 ; — of the soil, at different ends of the village, 271 ; efficacious only at home, 271 ; munching a cake, 271 ; origin of the, 271 ; poor, and temple ruined, 297 ; — of wealth, a living, 312 ; the local, catching locusts, 195 ; falling into the river, 222.  
 Goddess of child-bearing, 113 ; — of mercy, temple faces north, 261.  
 Gods and fairies, cannot discriminate medicines, 270 ; like, when riding in a sedan, 354 ; make blunders, 34 ; will lose, by persistent gambling, 314, 366 ; every doctrine has its, 32 ; kept, but the temple sold, 195 ; lying on one's back and drawing, 224.  
 Gold, gone, and friends departed, P, 75 ; hard, but can be melted, 256 ; ingot of, across a river, P, 75 ; ingot of, and Yen Hui, 94 ; silver, and iron places, named, 345.  
 Good and evil, results of following, 46 ; reward and punishment of, 46 ; —, valuable at a distance, 271 ; — for nothing, 371.  
 Goose, a feather from every passing, 33 ; knob on the head of, 222 ; trying to seize the, 222.  
 Gourd, growing in a kettle, 233.

- Grain, each has its kernel, 32 ; he who has, will not be a teacher, 19 ;  
—s, of old millet, separate, 205 ; seeds in a cart-load of, 105.
- Granary, keeper of, boiling rice all night, 288 ; losing a single chesnut from a, 105.
- Grapes, eating, 194 ; raised in an alms-house, 255.
- Grass, bends when the wind blows, 7, 320 ; worthless as a blade of, 23 ;  
-hoppers, local god catching, 195 ; praying to the god of, 290 ; two  
sisters catching, 218. See Locust.
- Gratitude, to Heaven, to Earth, to the Prince, C, 58.
- Grave, ferry behind the ancestral, 233 ; —s, robber of, resembling, 297 ;  
site of selected by a woodcutter, 36, 319 ; -yard plot, not so good as  
heart-plot, 196.
- Great men, come from nourishing their nature, 43.
- Grief, but not in excess, 235.
- Ground, broader when the turnips are pulled, 256.
- Guest, do not ask about killing a chicken, 291 ; every one treated as a,  
290 ; —s, few, when one's clothes are torn, 18 ; having entertained  
for many years, 206 ; served with water, for wine, 155 ; sincere  
treatment of, 351.
- Guitar, a monkey thrumming on a, 232 ; without rests for the strings, 197.
- Gulf, apprehensive, as on the edge of a, 44.

## H.

- Habit brings naturalness, 34.
- Hair, the 2nd daughter combing her, 364 ; —s, cannot be pulled from an  
iron donkey, 287 ; -pin, the old lady's, busy, 362.
- Half way, to stop, 42.
- Han Hsin saved by one battle, 101 ; stooping, 102.
- Han the Sea, and Su the Tide, 110.
- Han Tan Hsien, hard to give up, 136.
- Hand, child, taking its mother's, 358 ; easily taken with the, 242 ; in  
the throat, 289 ; of a slave, do not take, C, 54 ; —s, and feet, frozen,  
232 ; busy, 245 ; different sizes of, denotes poverty, 308 ; diseases of,  
are bad signs, 268 ; seven, and eight feet, 242 ; the barber clapping  
his, 208 ; washing the, and escaping, 358.
- Handsome, P'au an, 114.
- Happiness, and calanity, from virtue and vice, 43 ; and misery are  
reward and punishment, 260 ; and old age, 151 ; in sight, 151.
- Hare, dies and fox mourns, 348 ; head of, and snake's eyes, 297 ; image  
of, with a beard, 295 ; letting go when asleep, 33 ; running against  
a tree, 33 ; the jade rises in the east, 318 ; -lip, blowing out a lamp,  
216 ; —s, two, quarreling, 216.
- Harmony, above, and below, 41 ; of man, and advantages of earth, 42 ;  
pill, for the family, P, 66.
- Haste, to use in, 35.
- Hat, a summer, used for a dipper, 361.
- Hatred, great as Heaven and Earth, 369.
- Head, and foot, a sentence for the, 244 ; child, carried on one's 304 ;  
fit for decapitation, a, 297 ; of a grave-robber, 297 ; of a cock and  
a hare, 350 ; one turn of the, is the shore, or 100 years, 260 ; paying to  
have cut off, 297 ; shaving, when hungry, 267 ; the 3 transforma-  
tions collected in the, 325 ; three feet above is fire, 322, and spirits,  
354 ; unwilling to turn the, 261 ; white early, owner in demand, 309.



- Hear**, a deaf man knows not how to, 13; he will, who knows how, and v.v., 33; —ing, better than speaking, 34.
- Heart**, and mouth, opposed, 286; depraved, 237; dipped out, 232; disturbed by cat's tread, 325; cultivating the, 196; divided in, 46; eyes of the, 342; like 15 buckets of water, 369; like a horse on a plain, 277; like a monkey, 277; moves, and the blood comes in tides, 269; most erratic thing in the world, 277; my good, taken for a donkey's liver, 296; not cut by the knife, 224; not having any, only lungs, 197; not pure, 229; of turnips, frozen, 217; the, only fully known in extremity, 256; the, upright, and v.v., 257, virtue and vice dependent on the, 347; plot, the, better than a graveyard plot, 196.
- Heaven**, a canopy, earth a blanket, P, 72; acts of, without sound, 45; acts, without man, 43; and earth, hatred like, 369; and earth, recompense of differs, 260; and earth, the parent of all, 46; cannot be imposed on, 348; does not fear man, 348; good, a woman mourning her husband, 207; human dependence upon, P, 150; is great, and man small, 189; is number one, and you number two, 344; kitchen-god, reporting to, 203-4; makes rules for the people, 46; not sparing of doctrine, 21; no two suns, 43; not visible to a frog in a well, 357; opportunities of, and advantages of earth, 42; reckoning of, 7; rejoicing in the decrees of, 43; sees, as my people see, 46; Spirits ascend to, 323; the Son of, parent of the people, 46; the way of, is to reward the good, etc., 46; will comply with the wish of the people, 46; —s, beyond the heavens, P, 74; —endowed fool, cannot be taught, P, 79.
- Hedge**, and wall, leaning against a, 27; a ram, plunging into a, 43; —hog, holding in both hands, 241; man likened to a, 296; weasel eating the, 322.
- Hemp-curd**, the Provincial Treasurer eating, 255; —stalk, chimneys cleaned with a, 208.
- Hen**, crowing of, indicates calamity, 46; head of, and of the cock, 350.
- Heng Shui Hsien**, and the Hu T'o river, 128.
- History**, a knowledge of requires five cart-loads of books, 119.
- Ho** and **Huan**, could not cure worms in the heart, 99.
- Hole**, the serpent knows his own, 3; —s, picking up lily-roots by the, 205.
- Home**, not having a, 226; staying 1,000 days at, 288.
- Honan**, the one market town of, 132.
- Hoofs**, of the porpoise, white, 223.
- Horn**, a crooked, blown by a wry mouth, 257.
- Horse**, a camel taken for a double backed, 244; a, cannot wear two saddles, 32; estimated by his saddle, 285; frightened when the mule is beaten, 349; given for an ox, 290; gone, and then divining, 365; led by a monkey, 218; lowering his bridle, 91; meeting a devil, 212; mouth of a, and donkey's lips, 25; must have extra feed, 32; rolling off, and escaping, 358; riding one to catch another, 15; should be fat, 356; stepping on the cart, 365; tail of a, blown by the wind, C, 57; urged along the highway, 363; wanted, that is cheap, etc., 21; why become a, for posterity? 286; —hair, bean-curd tied by a, 196.
- Horse-back riding**, an inscription while on, 106.
- Host**, an old, 206.

- House, like a rented, no deed, 226 ; removed, by geomancers, 318 ; standing, and lying land, 351.  
 Huai Lu Hsien, on the way to Ching Hsing, 234.  
 Hsiao Ch'ao, and his great slaughter, 109.  
 Huang Mao, the play of, 214.  
 Humility reaps reward, 154.  
 Hump-back, climbing a mountain, 221 ; garment of, short in front, 221.  
 Husband, and wife quarrelling, 238 ; sings, and his wife accompanies, 41.

## I.

- Ice, disappears in the 9th nine, 263 ; like treading on thin, 44.  
 Idlers, kept out, 233.  
 Illness, children can bear severe, 267.  
 Infant, a new-born in a flour-jar, 207.  
 Inferiors, K'ung Wen not ashamed to ask, 34.  
 Ink, the palest, better than a good memory, 35.  
 Insane, half, 223.  
 Insect, on the tail of a steed, 112 ; —s, eat water-plants, 16  
 Iron, Face, man with the, 113 ; poor, made into nails, 346 ; refuses to become steel, 23.  
 Itch, of experts, hard to scratch, 359.

## J.

- Jade, a flaw in, can be mended, 45 ; of no value, compared to time, 40 ; one's body should be guarded like, 45 ; restored to the State of Chao, 97-8.  
 Jar, your excellency please enter the, 100.  
 Jealous, impossible to be more, than a woman, 32.  
 Joys, the four, P, 180.  
 Judge, in Hades, falling sick, 207.  
 Juggler, on a branch, 246 ; spreading his rug, 238  
 Jumping, in front and behind, 208.

## K.

- Kan Lo, the youthful minister, P, 124.  
 Kang Hsiang Hui, the, 239.  
 K'ang, do not sleep on a cold, 155 ; how came you to die on the ? 323.  
 Kernel, the, of a peach and an apricot, 238.  
 Kettle, a cold, sending out hot vapour, 26.  
 Keys, the 2nd daughter, carrying the, 364.  
 Killing a man, and defiling the ground, 355.  
 Kindness to the animate Creation, P, 76.  
 Kitchen god, see god-of-the Kitchen.  
 Knife, a blind man grinding a, 197 ; falling into a well, 199 ; in the side, 224.  
 Knowings, the four, 159.  
 Knowledge, clear, more valuable than profound, 36.  
 Kuang Tung, to be avoided, 135.  
 K'un Mountains, on fire and gems burned, 47.  
 K'ung Ming's wisdom, 103.  
 K'ung Wen asking inferiors, 34.



## L.

- Lamb, kneeling to suck, 26.  
 Lamp, death, like the extinguishment of a, 260; no need of, on the 20th of the moon, 264; the dim, of the spirit-pavilion, 359; two hare-lips blowing out a, 216.  
 Land, having a little always at law, 346; I have no, 345; lying, and standing houses, 351; standing on your patch of, 346.  
 Language, plain, when the partition is broken down, 213.  
 Lantern, a blind man carrying a, 205; an iron-wire, and pockmarks, 257; nephew looking for his uncle with a, 223; winnowing wheat by a, 233; —s, blind man going to see the, 249.  
 Laugh, the one, of Pao Ssu, 153.  
 Lawsuit, always engaged in a, 346; beware of, when involving murder, 344; depends on the original accusation, 16.  
 Leaf, one moves, 100 branches shake, 31.  
 Leak, at the bottom, 293.  
 Learning with constant perseverance, 38, 190.  
 Leather, workers in, slow, 353; troubling others, 361.  
 Legs, and arms, exercise of, not equal to questions, 34; not beaten with a club, 352; of actor's, 352; tangled by spirits, 323.  
 Li of the Iron Staff, winking, 92.  
 Li Po's banishment, P, 175.  
 Li Ts'ui Lien, Mrs., death of, by hanging, 213; fasting, etc, 214.  
 Li Tzu Ch'eng's son, not wanted, 373.  
 Liang Shan, the general of, 222.  
 Library, a rat entering a, 205.  
 Licentiousness, exhortations against, 259-260.  
 Leisure, prepare in, to use in haste, 35, 245.  
 Life, a long, from murder and arson, 10; and death decreed by Heaven, 41; comes from calamity, 43; without limit, 44; time of virtue spoiled, 27.  
 Lilac flowers, 100, 1,000, and 10,000 heads of, C, 55.  
 Lilies, golden, insecure footing, 106.  
 Lily-root, eaten with one chop-stick, 205.  
 Ling Kuan's horses, unresting, 301.  
 Literary Graduate, a bag of false characters, 29.  
 Littles make much, 36.  
 Liu Hai and Meng Chiang together, 122.  
 Liu Hsiu, entering the kingdom of, 123.  
 Liu Pei, as District Magistrate, 36; braiding mats, 103; throwing down his child, 104.  
 Liu the Sixth, dying of vexation, 193-4.  
 Lizard, the, worshipping the Dipper, 315.  
 Lo Ch'en's short life, 108.  
 Lo Hans, the 18, daughters like, 302.  
 Locusts, heads of in dumplings, 195; two sisters catching, 218.  
 Loss, a great, and small gain, 293.  
 Louse, easy capture of, 242.  
 Lu Chün I, the rebel, 178.  
 Lu Su, without decision, 106.

- Luck, a bath-house that has lost its, 238 ; better die, than lose, 238 ; in a large head, mouth, and feet, 306 ; necessary for a man, 356.  
 Lung Wang seeing the world, 287-8 ; temple of, washed away, 322.  
 Lust, excited by meretricious arts, 43-4 ; the worst of vices, C, 292.  
 Lute, a blind man thrumming on a, 217.  
 Lü Chu, hearing with her eye-brows, 124.  
 Lü Meng Cheng's cap, 114 ; late at meals, 114.  
 Lü Tung Piu, bitten by a dog, 92.

## M.

- Magistrate, the, of Heaven, bestowing blessing, 236, 251 ; the Assistant, 225, 370 ; upright, and family disputes, 292 ; using unexampled severity, 345.  
 Maize, an ear of in the girdle, 223.  
 Man, an intelligent, requires prevision, and v. v., 32 ; an earthly fairy, 370 ; can be imposed on, but not Heaven, 348 ; horse, spear, and sword, 243 ; is a small Heaven, 139 ; mind of, prone to err, 46 ; must have a nickname, 32 ; not valued away from home, 271 ; originally good, 40, 303 ; predicates of the bad, 356 ; the spirit of the Universe, 46.  
 Men, and beasts, each have their language, 213 ; and places, have a destiny, 310 ; and women, should not touch one another, 45 ; differ in practice, 40 ; do not favor, but the right, 350 ; fear to wear boots, 362 ; good, are attached to each other, 348 ; intelligent, perform no dark deeds, 281 ; of ability, abundant, 17 ; reckoning of, not equal to those of Heaven, 7 ; two, of the same mind can divide metal, or change earth to gold, 43 ; who do not learn, will not know propriety, nor equal brutes, 40.  
 Manchu Eight Banners, 233.  
 Many faults, 18.  
 Mao Chou, display at the fair at, 133.  
 Marriage, of children the most important duty, 303 ; rules for deciding on the month for, 311.  
 Mast, a feast spread on a, 208 ; long, measure short, C, 50.  
 Meat, a fragment of tainted spoils all, 51 ; for an old lady's birthday, 195 ; -seller, carrying a portal, 195.  
 Medicine, and fortune-telling, professions, 347 ; practice of, better than study, 270 ; taken on a spatula, 227.  
 Meeting, a, not to be given up, 354.  
 Melon, cannot leave its stem, 358 ; exposed to the sun, yellow, 221 ; in buying, yield to old age, 344 ; —s, and fruits, unripe, useless, P, 79.  
 Memory, a good, not equal to clumsy writing, or to pale ink, 35 ; holding everything once seen, 106 ; -pearl, to be sought, 36.  
 Meng Ch'ang Chün, using others, 96.  
 Meng Chiang and Liu Hai, together, 122.  
 Meng Liang, and his gourd, 113.  
 Mercury scarce, and red earth substituted, 302.  
 Merit, great, reward large, 46.  
 Middle, to stand in the, without leaning, 42.  
 Mildness and severity in turn, 44.  
 Milky-way, as related to the seasons, 266.  
 Millet, feeding chickens with, 237 ; pointing to, and borrowing rice, 353 ; separate grains in old, 205.  
 Min-tzu, grave of, 131.



- Mind enlarged, and the body at ease, 41.  
 Ming Dynasty, Empire of, half lost, 117.  
 Minister, a loyal, no two masters, 32 ; —s, loyalty of, dependent on the Prince, 303 ; will be like their Emperor, 95.  
 Mirror, with the glass to the wall, 209.  
 Mistakes, an abundance of, 232 ; looking for, 232.  
 Mohammedan, a small, 225 ; one alone, is not a good, 198 ; —s, called dogs, 197 ; great wranglers, 198 ; two fighting, 197.  
 Mold and bricks alike, 31.  
 Monastery of T'an Che, burned, 128 ; -ies, for men and for women, opposite, 27.  
 Money, helps the loin eyes, 373 ; squeezes in, plan of, 372 ; T'eng T'ung's mountain of, 268 ; the greater cannot buy the less, 344 ; -shaking tree, 313.  
 Monkey, a, leading a horse, 218 ; seizing the shears, 231 ; thrumming a guitar, 232 ; —ies, attached to one another, 348.  
 Month, dysentery in the 6th, 269 ; suitable for a wedding, rules for, 311 ; unlucky days in the, 320 ; widow remarrying within a, 292 ; various proverbs relating to the different, 261-5.  
 Moon, and the stars, 24 ; and wind, without boundaries, 177 ; obscured by a beauty, 122 ; women worshipping, 203 ; -light, not equal to day-light, 22 ; sitting waiting for, 264.  
 Mosquitoes, in the 7th and 8th months, 262.  
 Mother, a, better alive than dead, 131 ; cannot be given up, 305-6 ; lost in childhood, 310 ; reviling her daughter, 51 ; sons of the same, good and bad, 96 ; sorrow of a, P, 81-2.  
 Mother-in-law, not equal to a mother, 22 ; praising a son-in-law, 27.  
 Mound, lacking one basketful of earth, 46.  
 Mountain, an old, 219 ; not really old, C, 53 ; stone striking the, 231 ; —s, high, fields well planted, P, 174 ; in the rain, hard to draw, 18 ; not high, waters not deep, 136 ; small, city gates not opposite, 129 ; three-tenths of, and six-tenths water, 250, 371.  
 Mourning, do not ask about the expense of, 45-6.  
 Mouth, all, locusts' heads in dumplings, 195 ; and heart opposed, 286 ; away, blowing a spiral horn, 257 ; child, carried in one's, 304 ; cricket gives up his, 199 ; crow propped up by his, 195 ; golden, and pearly words, 320 ; hooks in a fish's, 209 ; luck from a big, 306 ; of a dead crab no froth, 199 ; of a donkey, muzzled, 199 ; of a kitchen-god, pasted up, 203 ; of the Emperor, no idle word, 320 ; of the professional, not afraid to talk, 347 ; of a professional, and an actor's legs, 352 ; pig raising a screen by his, 195 ; sweet, heart bitter, 286 ; the red going to heaven, 319 ; two, in the same character, 159 ; unable to get out by the, 205.  
 Mu Lan Tien, foot-cloths of, 133.  
 Mulberry-bush, cultivating beyond the, 308.  
 Mule beaten, horse fears, 349.  
 Multiplication table, sayings from the, 371-2.  
 Murder can be condoned, 24 ; case of, adjusted, 361.

## N.

- Nail, not daring to drive a, 233 ; striking against on a city gate, 195.  
 Nan Yang Fu, pun on, 235  
 Naps, the tiger has his, 34.

- Nausea, from eating fat, 223.  
 Navigation, and plowing at the Great and Small Snow terms, 262.  
 Neck, the tiger has no, 222.  
 Needles, like sitting on, 121; the tailor pawns his, 223.  
 Neighbor, a near, better than a remote relative, 32.  
 Nephew, a (pun on 'outside province'), 224; looking for his uncle, 223.  
 Nest falls, and eggs break, 106.  
 Net, plunging in yourself, do not complain, 288.  
 New Year, comes after spring, 263; nothing to eat at the, 229; Wang Hsiao, at the, 229.  
 Nickname, a man should have a, 32; —s, of people of different parts of China, 134.  
 Night-thoughts, P, 70.  
 Nine affairs will fail, 371.  
 Nine, Nines, characteristics of the, 262-3; hope in the, but not in the dog-days, 263; spring in the 6th, 263; times 9, 371.  
 Ninety-nine, but not 101, 370-1.  
 Nose, an eagle, 257; crooked, intentions bad, 257; with three nostrils, 258.  
 Nuus, daughters should not become, 355; nine out of ten bad, 355.

## O.

- Oath to kill a father's murderer, 358.  
 Odes, he who has not read, cannot talk, 41.  
 Official, to be for one generation, etc., 26; servant of, not his own master, 31.  
 Oil-seller, without his pen, 237.  
 Old age, signs of, P, 71; peach of, 298; pun on, 223; of men, beasts and wares, 314; taken for right, 344.  
 Old Age Star, proverbs about the, 201; on a donkey, 231.  
 Old, man, the picking up a cash, 218; no further addition, 207; people, not to be kept, 268.  
 Old Lady, the, buying meat for the birth-day of, 195; calling the cat, 215; spreading out the cards, 224; the staff of the, 230; various proverbs relating to the, 272.  
 Old Villager, the, and ancestral tablets, 361; and arsenic, 230; and cherries, 230; and chess, 233; and a figured mattress, 206; and a gauze veil, 196; and rice porridge, 197; and ram's-horn fire-works, 221; and scrolls, 228, 232; and a thimble, 237; and a watering-pot, 196; and water-lily seeds, 237; various proverbs concerning the, 273-5.  
 One, acrid taste, 369; cannot be wiser than two, 287; day, to be idle for, 291; eats, and the whole family is satisfied, 355; fit of drunkenness, 369; heaven, and two earths, 369; leer at a brother, 370; large, and one small, 369; man, horse, etc., 356; side, a daub on, 363; should not enter a temple alone, 355; thing known by another, 36; thing, reduces another, 243, 317.  
 Onions and bean-curd mixed, 223; single-bulbed, 255.  
 Opium-smokers. P, 79-80; -den, a lamp for the corpse, 260.  
 Orphans, have many descendants, 310.  
 Others, eating the food of, till perspiration comes, 291; every one must ask favors of, 293; should be treated politely, 290; thoughts of, measured by mine, 44; vain dependence on, P, 73, 290.



Ounces, eight, and half a catty, 370 ; sixteen, of filial piety, and of luck, 370 ; twelve, behavior, 370 ; two, and 8/10 of silver, 373.  
 Owl, and the woodpecker, the, 245 ; entering a dwelling, 245, 319 ; head of to warn the public, 250 ; Wu Ta Lang hawking with a, 126.  
 Ox, present of a, repaid by a horse, 290 ; spring cold will freeze an, 357 ; -knife not used to kill a fowl, 41.

## P.

Pa Wang, inviting guests, 101 ; losing his life, 101 ; origin of, P, 102.  
 Paces, running, 50, and ridiculing him who ran 100, 42.  
 Paint-shop, sign of a, 201.  
 P'an An, and his beauty, 114.  
 P'ang Chüan, not to be imitated, 102.  
 Pao Cheng with the Iron Face, 113.  
 Pao Ssu's one laugh, 153.  
 Pao-ting-fu, peculiarities of, 130.  
 Paper money burned against the wind, 244.  
 Parents, all good, 305 ; all love their children, 109 ; affectionate, but not their children, 305 ; can do without their children, 305 ; he who has not, boasts of filial piety, 303 ; should be notified on entering and on exit, 45 ; should be nourished, 45.  
 Partition, breaking down the, and speaking plainly, 213.  
 Pass, the, opened early and closed late, C, 50.  
 Paste, brushing on the clouds, 236.  
 Pawn-shop, child taken into a, 209 ; the, east of the river, 237 ; —s, the eastern and the western, C, 56.  
 Peach Orchard, oath of the, 102 ; —es, harmless, apricots and plums, dangerous, 269 ; -tree, the, graceful, 235.  
 Peacock, and the Old Villager, 273.  
 Pearl, thrown into lacker, 359 ; —s, restored to Ho P'u, 97.  
 Pears, not eaten, but turnips, 255.  
 Peking, blackguards of, P, 212 ; people of, oily, 134 ; and hungry, 135 ; priests in, and officials out of, 353 ; sharpers of, 198 ; three peculiarities of, 130 ; to be inundated, 128 ; willow tree of, 312.  
 Pen, the expert writer, does not pick his, 34.  
 P'eng Tsu, living 800 years, P, 124.  
 People, the, are the root of a country, 47 ; have no two sovereigns, 43 ; protected by Heaven, 46 ; the wishes of, are granted by Heaven, 46.  
 Pepper, red, and anise seed, 226.  
 Perfection comes by rules, 42.  
 Pheasant, looking only in front, 243 ; wearing a hood, 232.  
 Phlegm, a criterion of disease, 269.  
 Phoenix, the, among birds, 246 ; attracted by the wu-t'ung tree, 254 ; embroidered on a shoe, C, 51 ; feathers of, and chicken's liver, C, 104 ; produces a phoenix, 153 ; roosting of, not equal to a chicken, 254, 288 ; slaughtering for food, 362 ; the eggs of a, 297.  
 Physician, a, cures disease, but kills the patient, 284 ; need not know many characters, 270 ; skill of, wasted without dieting, 269 ; understands the incompatible drugs, 284.  
 Pig, killed, but the price not fixed, 26 ; one has seen walking, 30 ; riding on a, 243 ; the little fattened, 199 ; —s, butchering of, advantages of, C. 55.

- Pill, a small, but efficacious, 230 ; —s, etc., gods and fairies cannot discriminate, 270 ; of dumplings, 270.
- Pity, the feeling of, common to all men, 43.
- Places, and men each have their destiny, 310.
- Planting, must not be forced, 263.
- Playing on instruments when full, 267.
- Pockmarks, do not associate with one who has, 257 ; resembling a wire lantern, 257 ; similes for, 257-8.
- Poison, administering, and also selling food, 313.
- Poor man, the, startled by the seller of pears, 19.
- Pork, and mutton have each their price, 360 ; eaten with the bristles on, 255 ; one who has never eaten, 30.
- Porpoise, white hoofs of, 223.
- Porridge, and flour balls, 297 ; eaten from the old kettle, 347.
- Posterity, bowels full of, 305 ; presses on, P, 66 ; unfilial not to have, 300 ; will have happiness of its own, 286.
- Portal, carried by a doll, 195 ; by a meat-seller, 195.
- Powder, insufficient, no sound, 221.
- Practice makes perfect, 34 ; of medicine, external and internal, 141.
- Praise and blame, unexpected, 42-3.
- Prefect, the, with his allowance of grain, C, 56.
- Present, the, not equal to the past, 70-71.
- Presents, interchange of, necessary, 290.
- Preparation, leads to success, and v.v., 42.
- Price, should be enhanced to the owner, 290.
- Pride, invites calamity, 154.
- Priest, a stinking, 297 ; on a donkey, C, 236 ; building a temple, without begging, 231 ; the, eating meat, and drinking wine, 227 ; the old, fanning a lamp, 363 ; selling his temple, 195 ; —s, called donkeys, 296 ; killing people, 355.
- Prince upright, ministers loyal, 303.
- Professions taken up by scholars, 347 ; the whole Universe is nothing but, 348.
- Profit, great, always accompanied by loss, 151 ; great, and loss the same, 293.
- Promises, do not lightly make, 347.
- Promotion, eight steps of, 298.
- Propriety, do not act contrary to, 189 ; involves reciprocity, 289.
- Prunes left, but the flour gone, 220 ; measured in a turtle-shell, 226 ; —stone, board cut with a, 230.
- Punishment asked, bearing rods, 98.

## Q.

- Q uail, the fighting, defeated at once, 16.
- Quarrels, of husband and wife, 238.

## R.

- Rabbit. See Hare.
- Rain, at a wedding, 311 ; autumn, cold, 261 ; falling first on the public fields, 44 ; official servants travelling in the, 31 ; over, a path in the road open, 342 ; stealing in the, 346 ; will not last long, 311 ; various proverbs relating to, 264-6.



- Rat**, **cat** weeping over the death of the, 348 ; entering a library, 205 ; in a cash-shop, 228 ; in a flour-jar, 341 ; on a cloud, a 'waster,' 296 ; vase thrown at a, 89.
- Rations**, soldiers hallooing the street without any, 221.
- Raven**, powdered white, P, 73.
- Reason** will not act in vain, 44.
- Reciprocity** in wine and tea, 73, 290.
- Reckonings** of Heaven and of man, 7.
- Reflecting** on one's village, etc., C, 58.
- Relative**, a, not so good as a neighbor, 32 ; —s, depend upon one's propriety, C, 52.
- Remnants**, alone left, 223.
- Repentance**, cannot be prevented, 220.
- Revilng**, does not alienate a daughter, 295 ; language of, needs no rough draft, 294 ; not to be used to the old, 295 ; should not refer to faults, 294 ; the man who rears the pale green dog, 299 ; used by boatmen, 295 ; used to, no pain felt, 295.
- Rice**, borrowing, and pointing to millet, 353 ; dropped in clear water, 206 ; sitting up all night, and boiling, 288.
- Rich**, the, are honored, 285 ; —es, adorn a house, 41 ; and honor, come from Heaven, 41 ; in abundance, 152.
- Right**, and left, fifty blows, 370 ; and left, trouble on the, 245 ; favour the, not men, 350 ; to be in the, 220 ; to be in the, not so important as influence, 220.
- Rivals** cannot both succeed, 23.
- River**, local god falling into the, 222 ; requires a boat to cross it, 44 ; travelling on, when frozen, 346 ; —s, all run into the sea, 14.
- Road**, a, ending nowhere, 297 ; —s, and bridges repaired cause blindness, 10.
- Robbery**, invited by carelessness, 43-4.
- Robe**, putting on a lousy, 358.
- Roof**, six kinds of animals on the, 350.
- Rope**, made at midnight, 221.
- Round**, and the square, the, combined, 241.
- Rules**, necessary for perfection, 42.

## S.

- Sales**, early and late, 355.
- Salt**, and pickles, the mouth of the eater of, 373 ; to become in a lawsuit about smuggled, 344 ; -Commissioner's hired troops, 217 ; -stack, sitting on a, 237.
- San Ho Hsien**, head-dress of the women of, 232.
- Sauce-pan**, garlic pounded in a, 204.
- Screen**, hooked with a jade hook, C, 50.
- Sea**, a boundless bitter, and repentance, 260 ; a sparrow crossing the, 207 ; commanded by a fort, C, 160 ; crossed, deceiving the Emperor, 108 ; rivers all run into the, 14 ; within the four, all are brethren, 41 ; -crabs, crossing the river, clumsy, 242 ; large nippers of, 222 ; Shansi man eating, 208.
- Sect**, and doctrine, 32.
- Sedan-chair**, wailing in a, 202 ; -coolies, coming on a dog, 208.
- Self**, depending on, limits knowledge, 34, but produces happiness, 45.

- Sentence half a, spoils the virtue of a lifetime, 27.
- Serpent a match for the dragon, 14; and other noxious reptiles, etc., 315; drinks from the tank, C, 51; eyes of, and hare's head, 297; knows his own hole, 3; with two heads, 317.
- Shadow, no in front, 221; on a cloudy day, 196; -pictures, for theatricals, 200.
- Shaker-bird, the, P, 65-6.
- Shame, the feeling of, common to all men, 43.
- Shansi, camel-litters of, 134; man from, eating crabs, 208; mule from, learning a horse's whinney, 234; people of, care only for money, 135.
- Shantung, the one village of, 132; the people of, carrying bedding, 134; the three abundances of, 133; two men of, quarrelling, 135.
- Shao Hsing Fu, wine of, 220.
- Shears, a monkey seizing the, 231.
- Sheep, in a tiger's skin, C, 104, 283; leading a, and carrying wine, 351; plunging into a hedge, 241; pretending to be a, 232; wool of, beaten by rain, C, 57.
- Shelves behind the cooking boiler, 237.
- Shen Chou, the three specialties of, 132.
- Shen Tung, 64-5.
- Shen Wan Shan, the Nanking Croesus, 312.
- Shih Ch'ung, prestige of disappeared, 124; stung by a scorpion, 124; wealth of, 124.
- Shoes, new, 237; too small, 358; handle for, a vegetable stalk, 361.
- Shore, turn the head, and there is the, 260.
- Shoulders, round, etc., a sign of poverty, 308.
- Sickness, in time of, do not ask what is relished, 46.
- Silk-worms spin silk, 40.
- Silver, in abundance hard to get, 22; returning to its owner, 318; twenty-five ounces of, 223; -smith, steals silver, 353; -shop, managing a, 354.
- Sincerity, Reciprocity, Mercy, Recompense, C, 59-60.
- Singing, when hungry, 267.
- Sins, many cannot prevent repentance, 260; only, follow the body, 259; why wait to repent of, 260.
- Sisters, two, catching locusts, 218.
- Six of one, and half a dozen of the other, 370.
- Size, one of a large, likely to be simple, 309.
- Skimmer on the breast, a, 232; who cares to mend a, 156.
- Skin robe worn wrong side out, 232.
- Sky falling, feared by the men of Ch'í, 358.
- Sleeping on a cold *k'ang*, 155-6.
- Sleeve, the ma-hu-tzu in the, 315.
- Small, nourishing, the great lost, 43; cannot oppose the great, etc., 42.
- Smoke, the, envelops the willows, C, 159.
- Sneezing at dawn, 237.
- Snow, in the 3rd Nine, 346; the 'Small', and the 'Great' 262; -storm, charcoal sent in, 31.
- Snowing at daylight, 207.
- Soldier, a good man does not become a, 346; hallooing the street, 221.
- Somersault, the 'Corean,' 366; turned on a cloudy day, 196.
- Son, a, does not speak his father's name, 45; and father, both brave, 18; resembling a, 364; the best, another's, the worst, one's own, 22; with-



- out ambition, iron without steel, 23 ; one, and one daughter, 301 ; —s, a succession of honorable, 152 ; and grandsons, do not be slaves for, 286 ; attachment for, 305 ; born late, short life, 299 ; do not have two, 301 ; filial, hard to get, 22 ; five, and two daughters, 300 ; he who has not, can boast of, 303 ; house full of, not equal to a second wife, 304 ; many, many family foes, and fears, 300-301 ; no need of many, 301 ; not well reared, a trouble, 301 ; of an orphan, many, 310 ; of the same mother, all different 96, 258 ; reared for old age, 302 ; vicious, are Heaven's punishment, 300 ; -in-law, praised by a mother-in-law, 27.
- Sorrow, from lack of fore-thought, 41.
- Sound, at every step, 230 ; going up to heaven, 221 ; iron fire-crackers make no, 221 ; louder than before, 221 ; of boiling water, no, 221 ; the, of wind, rain, and of studying, C, 57.
- Soup, two kinds of, 227.
- Spark, a single, sets the mountains of fire, 27.
- Sparrow, a, crossing the sea, 207.
- Speaking, not equal to hearing, 34.
- Speech, a flaw in, remediless, 45 ; looking for results from, 372.
- Spirits, evil, should avoid good men, 322 ; jumping wildly about, 323 ; of the wronged, will not disperse, 322 ; running into the five evil, 316 ; tangle the legs, 323 ; three feet above the head, 322, 354.
- Spring, and Autumn Annals, reading the, C, 52 ; stupid about, C, 51 ; cold, freezes an ox, 357 ; dress warmly in the, 268 ; epidemics in the, 267 ; rain in the, 264 ; the establishment of, 263 ; exasperations of, P, 68.
- Squashes, selling Japanese, 353.
- Ssu Ch'uan, do not enter when old, 135.
- Ssu Ma, preserved by Heaven, 103.
- Stage, laughter above and below, C, 61.
- Stars, and the moon, 24 ; the three illuminating here, 200.
- State, the, prospers and suffers from one expression, 41 ; —s, the, of Yü and Kuo, 96.
- Steel, iron that refuses to become, 23 ; iron without, a son with no ambition, 23.
- Stick, a crooked, cannot be straightened, P, 79.
- Stone, in a pickle-jar, 246 ; heavy, boat light, C, 50 ; of many years, 219 ; striking stone, 231-2 ; roller, falling into a well, 200 ; and into a valley, 232 ; tiger drawing a, 207.
- Story-teller, the, going according to his book, 196 ; looking at his fan, 196 ; without music, 208.
- Straw hats, and straw shoes, selling, 244.
- Streams flow without pause, 40.
- Strength, unequal to lifting a feather, 42.
- Studying, in different seasons, P, 69-70.
- Su Ch'in, the same, but the clothes changed, 94.
- Su, the Tide, and Han, the Sea, 110.
- Sun, and moon, cold and heat, 44 ; chased by K'ua Fu, 358 ; fills the window, etc., C, 53 ; sets, moon rises, and v.v. 44 ; -set, meaning of vapors at, 264.
- Sun Hou, proverbs relating to, 276-7.
- Sun Pin and P'ang Ch'uan, 102.
- Sung Chiang's nest of robbers, 114.

Superior Man, the, alone acts as should, P, 79 ; body of, like jade, 45 ; dis-  
criminates property, 25 ; easily entreated, 252 ; eating and sleeping,  
limits his (Superior Man) desires, 41 ; kept in obscurity, 44 ; on  
the beam, 363 ; path of, and of the mean man, 44 ; rules the country-  
man, etc., 42 ; sends charcoal in a snowstorm, 31 ; waits for  
fortune, 102.

## T.

Table, covering a well, 241.

Tailor, pawning his needle, 223 ; stealing cloth, 353.

T'ai Shan, the stones of, hard, C, 58.

Talk of early orphans, endless, 310 ; fine, 222 ; is empty, 34.

Tao Cho, preceptor of thieves, 95.

Taot'ai, each has his own 'tao,' 197.

T'ang Dynasty, twice submitting to the, 107.

Taste, each has own, 255 ; —s, of people of different parts of China, 135.

Teacher, and pupil, thief-catcher, etc., C, 61 ; the, anxious in the autumn,  
19 ; busy, at the winter solstice, 19 ; hard lot of, 19 ; he who has  
grain will not be a, 19 ; not able to write difficult characters, 337,  
to be found among three men together, 33 ; —s, indolence, shown in  
teaching without severity, 40.

Tea, pouring out, and cutting the melon, 351 ; -pot, abroken in a hospital,  
225 ; -shop, water in, boiling, 298.

Tears, flowing into the stomach, 258.

Teeth, goue, and not forgetting, 351 ; of the Second Assistant Magistrate,  
225.

Temple, an ancient, 219 ; one man should not enter a, 355 ; one on  
another, 219 ; of Wu Tsang, reckless building of, 358.

T'eng Tung, dying of starvation, 268.

Theater, expense of a, 20.

Theatricals, insanity of, 273 ; offending the god of, 315 ; the old villager  
looking at, 273 ; the southerner looking at, 228.

Thief, a, meeting the thief-taker, 341 ; the tattooed, P, 82 ; -taker, and  
the horse, etc., C, 62.

Thieves, and prostitutes, may his children become, 236 ; kept out, good  
men enter, 233 ; outside, and those of the family, 293 ; using  
extraordinary skill, 345.

Thimble, the needle strikes the, 237.

Things that go wrong 371.

Thistle in a drug-shop, 223.

Thoughts on hemp, 221.

Throat, a little hand in the, 289.

Three difficult things to be had, 22 ; divination goes by, 33 ; men, my  
teacher among, 33.

Thumb, following the fingers in scratching, 258.

Thunder and lightning, distant effects of, 370.

Thyme, eating pills made of, 145-6.

Tide in the morning, etc., C, 62.

Tientsin, fire and flood, but not war, at, 129 ; people of, brawlers, 134 ;  
thirsty devils, 135, and wranglers, 198 ; three treasures of, 131.

Tiger, a double-headed, 367 ; the, and leopards afraid of unicorns, 316 ;  
the, drinks from the tank, C, 51 ; the, drawing a stone-roller, 207 ;  
eating copperas to poison a, 291 ; entering a cave, 243 ; fears a



- good man, 363; fierce, but does not eat his cubs, 305; has naps, 34; has no neck, 222; man dying, becomes a, 324; new-born calf, not afraid of a, 18; sheep, in the skin of a, C, 104, 283; without teeth, 352; —s, a herd of from the south, 331; three at a birth, 309.
- Time, an inch of, valuable, 40; of day, told by a cat's eyes, 266; *that* was one, *this* is another, 42.
- Tinker, putting on glasses, 232; shakes his head, 233.
- Toes, of an old lady, P, 72.
- Tongue, and teeth, P, 72; mischief done by the, P, 78; the white, entering the earth, 319.
- Tools, must be sharpened for good work, 41.
- Tooth, a, knocked out, and swallowed, 258; of the old lady, loose, 272.
- Tou of Yen, 114-5.
- Tsang Chou, lions of, 130.
- Ts'ao Ts'ao, buying a horse, 123; sudden appearance of, 123.
- Tseng-tzu, Tzu-ssu, and Mencius, C, 59.
- Tsui Thick-legs, 194.
- Trade, no haste about, 20; —s, all in the world, 374; different, separated like mountains, 24; those of the same, are rivals, 24; those who work at, do not steal, and get rich with difficulty, 353.
- Transformations, capable of many, and a doughnut, 349-350.
- Travellers in the 7th Nine, 263.
- Tree, a fallen, no shade, 296; climbing a, to catch a fish, 42; fruit of the same sour and sweet, 96; of iron, bearing flowers, 331; reared for shade, 302; when large, will straighten itself, 304; wu-t'ung, phoenix, attracted by, 254.
- Trouble, he who knows not, will not make a man, 287; —s, saving from eight, 369.
- Trousers, worn on the head, 196.
- Tu Chih Heng, plotting, 116; the cannon of, 199.
- Tune, a northern, and a southern air, 234; not to be learned, 233.
- Tung Kuang Hsien, pagoda of, 130.
- Turnip, each has its hole, 255; heart of, frozen, 217; liking, and pears, 255; making food, without your red, 255; not washed, when market is brisk, 256; pulled, and ground broad, 256; with a black heart, 255-6, 273; —s, a patch of, and of vegetables, 255; the salted, on the chair, 246.
- Turtle, the old, freezing, 336 7.
- Twenty Li Shop, to be avoided, 135.
- Two busy people, only, in the world, 121.

## U.

- Uncle, the pole was given you by your, 363.
- Unity, of the teaching of Confucius, 74; of the Three Doctrines, P, 280-282.

## V.

- Valleys, leaving the, for lofty trees, and v v., 191.
- Vegetables, a patch of, and of turnips, 255; from another's garden, the best, 243.
- View of scenery from a height, P, 77.
- Village idlers few in spring; P, 78; on entering a, inquire the customs, 45; returning to one's native, P, 68.

Vinegar, money for, not used for pickles, 255; -sipping, taking a concubine, 23.

Virtue, adorns a person, 41; and fame, wickedness and destruction, 44; and Literature, C, 54; and vice, are outward acts, 260; lead to happiness and calamity, 43, and are rewarded at last, 260; confounded by specious words, 41; the root, wealth the result, 41.

## W.

Wadded garment, making a, 224; wearing a, without the lining, 220. Wailing in a sedan-chair, 202.

Wall, leaning on a, 27; should separate friends, 25; shouting on a, 226; treasures from beyond the Great, 132; writing a bad dream on a, 318.

Walnut, a thin, and full kernel, 232.

Wang Hua Eih's great luck, 117-8.

Wang Mang, eating the food of, 123-4.

Wang Shu Ho, the study of, 270.

War, demands strategy, 354.

Water, boiling, poured on the head, 223; bursting its banks, 302; clear, white rice dropped in, 206; distant, does not put out near fire, 32; in the back boiler, 221; intercourse with friends like, 155; medicine, taken without, 227; moon in the, 176; of Yü Ch'uan Shan, 243; the green, has no sorrow, C, 53; too hot to be entered, 206; yielding, hard when frozen, 256; -beetle flies home again, 318; -carrier, going by the well, 231; making a marriage alliance, 242; -pot, a broken mouth, 196; -lily seeds, never having seen, 237; -melon cut, and tea poured, 351.

Way, advance in the right, and v.v., 25; for the production of wealth, 41.

Wealth, given by Fate, 299; going west in search of, 237; longing for happiness, 251; of brothers, should be discriminated, 25; the result of virtue, 41; the word is ruled by, 285; valued more than life, 286.

Weasel, bites the sick duck, 369; eating the hedgehog, 322; stealing chickens, 322.

Weather, half comprehended at 30, 266; signs of, from vapors, etc., 264-5.

Weighing-pole, a, without dots, 196.

Weight of weighing-pole, the, used for balance, 202.

Well, a frog in a, 357; a knife falling into a, 199; a stone roller falling into a, 200; cleaned thrice, water is sweet, 34; two men should not look at together, 355.

Wheat, benefitted by the 3rd Nine snow, 346; picked up, and a devil turned the mill, 355; winnowed by lantern-light, 233.

Wheelbarrow, a, donkey, and horse, 245; -man, finding a girdle, 228.

Whetstone, and chopping-knife, 206.

Whiskers, do not associate with those who have not, 257.

White Clothes Sect, violating their rules, 220; wearing white, 220.

Wicked man, the, reviling the good man, P, 72; -ness, the destruction of the body, 44.

Widow, covered with a thin quilt, 227; fated to ruin her husband, 310; making her husband rich, 309; remarrying, within a month, 292.

Wife, an old, 220; advantage of an ugly, P, 76-7; got through a gobetween, 44; holding up her head, 255; like a brick on a wall, 292; of a living man, do not marry, 292; of another, the best, 243; of Chu



- Mai Ch'en, 100; one's own when dead, 20; relatives of, on the k'ang, 244.
- Wind, and moon without boundaries, 177; and rain, affecting a bride, 311; attracted by a northern window, 269; blows and the grass bends, 7, 320; comes before rain, 265; hearing, and inferring rain, 265; in spring, rain in summer, 265; soft, and a gentle rain, 265; stealing in the, 346; the official servant travels in the, 31; do not fan with the, 283.
- Windlass stops, beds are dry, 31.
- Wine at the graves, P, 77; cannot all be drunk up, 86; carrying, and leading a sheep, 351; exhortations against, 259-260; of Shao Hsing Fu, 220; one cash worth of, 231; reviling, after drinking, 299; pitcher, the Universe in a, P, 173-5; -saloon, a nest of wrongs, 259-260, 227
- Winter, vital forces stored up for the, 267.
- Wishes, everything according to one's, 152.
- Wolf, a, acting as a dog, P, 79; feared by the calf with horns, 19.
- Woman, acting the falcon, 292; a companion of adversity, and v.v., 69; a virtuous, has but one husband, 32; 'benevolence' of a, 69; is bad at heart, 69; impossible to be worse than a, 69.
- Women, fear to 'wear the cap,' 362; resentment of, P, 70; serpents, and hornets, P, 69; should sway in walking, 307; tests of beauty for, 307.
- Wood, carved in, and molded in mud, 351; country brought to waste by precious, P, 175; this is fuel, C, 160; -pecker, dying in its own hole, 224; on a mast, 224; the, and the owl, 245.
- Word, not to be exhausted in a, 246; —s, do not listen to unsubstantiated, 47; effect of a single, on the State, 41; fine, not equal to good acts, 286; many not so good as few, 72; no need of, 224; simple, and far-reaching, 43; of men, do not believe, C, 54; skillful, 224; specious, confound virtue, 41; without plan, do not make a scholar, 104.
- Work, may be hastened, but not food, 289; -man, the, must sharpen his tools, 41.
- Worms, in the heart, incurable, 99.
- Wormwood, cannot be sweetened, P, 79.
- Wretched, the, are many, 348.
- Wrong, to be in the, 220.
- Wu Sung's great brawl, 126.
- Wu Ta Lang, carrying a portal, 226; carrying rush baskets, 241; drawing a seed-drill, 232; the bag of, dragging, 207; various proverbs relating to, 125-7.
- Wu T'ai Shen, hail stones of, 297.
- Wu Tzu Hsu, breaking through the barrier, 241

## Y.

- Yamen, the military, has no cangue, 226.
- Yang Chen, and the Four Knowings, 159.
- Yao barked at, by Chou's dog, 122.
- Years, five, six months, seven days, etc., 356.
- Yellow, lama's cap, 221; melon, the, 221; vegetable leaves, 221.
- Yellow River, water of boiling, C, 58; woman jumping into the, 142-3
- Yen Hui, and the ingot of gold, 94; career of, finished early, P, 124.
- Yen Wang, and the monkey, 286-7; fan of, 196; invited guests of, 268; summoning a man of 73 and of 84, 268.
- Yen Ying, and his peaches, 96.
- Yuan Shao, and his troops, 104.



















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